





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761116306630>

CAZON
XI
-D23

142

Government
Publications



No. 133

N° 133

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

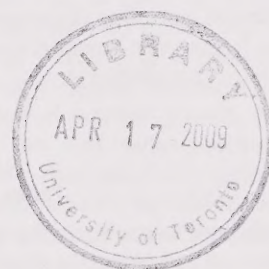
Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 7 April 2009

Mardi 7 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

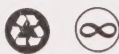
Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm sharing my time this morning with the member for Pickering-Scarborough East, the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan and the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I thank the House leader for leading this off for us this morning. I'm pleased this morning to be able to rise here and continue the debate regarding the Budget Measures Act and other matters for 2009.

It's no secret that Ontario is feeling the effects of this global economic crisis that we're all faced with. The impact on our economic growth, the impact on jobs and investments, is directly affecting the province's individuals, its families, its communities and its businesses. Job losses in the province have hurt families—there's no question about that—in the communities throughout this province. I know that my colleagues will be speaking to matters such as this, particularly the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. We've seen job losses in our mills, we've seen job losses in factories, and government revenues continue to decline at this point in time. The challenge that we're faced with in this budget and over the next period of time is very significant, but it's one that the people of Ontario will be able to meet, and they will overcome the difficult economic times we're faced with today.

On March 26, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, presented our government's sixth provincial budget. This budget takes imme-

diately actions to make Ontario more competitive, not only now but in the future as well. A strong, competitive economy helps families and businesses take advantage of the next generation of growth while maintaining and enhancing the province's very cherished public services. The McGuinty government's 2009 budget helps families weather this particular economic storm while ensuring Ontario's economy becomes stronger and even more competitive, so that when prosperity does return, not only in Ontario but other jurisdictions—and certainly it will return—families and businesses will benefit.

Five years ago, the McGuinty government was elected on its commitment to improve public services. Ontarians need those public services so that we can each of us reach our full potential. We needed to improve public education, our universal health care, the modern infrastructure necessary to support this province, and support for vulnerable citizens and a greener Ontario. When we came to office in 2003, our schools and hospitals were deteriorating. Class sizes were too large and more doctors and nurses were desperately needed. We were faced at that time with a \$5.5-billion deficit.

Between the years of 2003 and 2008 the province experienced strong revenue growth. This period of growth and prosperity allowed our government to make much-needed investments in these key public sector services. For five years, our government has invested in these public services to help ensure Ontarians do indeed reach their full potential. We managed spending in a prudent fashion, not allowing our average annual expenditure growth to exceed our average annual revenue growth. In other words, we ensured that we had more revenue coming in than our spending. We eliminated the deficit left by a previous government, and our debt-to-GDP ratio is lower than when we came to office. Today there are more teachers in our classrooms, more students in our colleges and universities. More families in Ontario have a family doctor and patients have shorter wait times for various surgeries and other key medical procedures. The Ontario child benefit is providing children who grow up in lower-income families with a better start in life. Our partnerships with cities and towns across the province are leading to infrastructure renewal throughout Ontario. We've invested in innovative companies and we've cut the cost of doing business.

Our government saw economic storm clouds on the horizon, and as a result we laid a foundation to respond. We are able to continue to support Ontarians because of the five-point economic plan that we put into place. This plan encourages growth and job creation through ongoing

investment in skills and knowledge, infrastructure, business partnerships and lowering business costs. Our government prepared for this economic storm by investing \$18 billion in infrastructure during the past two years. Shovels are already in the ground; we've seen job creation and sustained more jobs, some 85,000 in 2007-08 and more than 100,000 jobs during the last fiscal year.

However, the scope and scale of the global economic crisis that began in the fall of 2008 were both dramatic and unanticipated by all jurisdictions. Jurisdictions around the world are going into deficit because of declining revenues and the need to stimulate economies. Unfortunately, Ontario is no exception. The province has continued to experience the effects of the global economic challenges, resulting in significant revenue declines. But in order to help families and businesses being affected by the global recession and continue to take action to ensure Ontario is more competitive, so that our families and businesses benefit when prosperity returns, we too are forecasting a deficit budget.

0910

Changes in the 2008-09 fiscal outlook are primarily driven by revenue declines of \$3.5 billion, a decrease of 3.6% from the 2008 budget forecast. As a result, our government is forecasting a deficit of \$3.9 billion for the 2008-09 fiscal year and a peak deficit of \$14.1 billion in the coming fiscal year. To put this into perspective, as a percentage of the gross domestic product, Ontario's 2009-10 deficit is well below that of the United States. It is about the same as that now anticipated by our own federal government.

Our government has a track record of prudent management of expenditures. We found some \$111 million in savings in the past five months. We eliminated the deficit that we inherited. To that extent, we have laid out a prudent plan to balance the budget by 2015-16. To increase efforts to manage spending while protecting core public services, our government has a plan.

We'll hold the average annual rate of growth in core program expenditures below the rate of average annual growth in revenue, adopting efficiency practices and managing overall expenditures, including a \$1-billion efficiency target in 2011-12.

We'll expand the mandate of the Ontario Buys program to generate savings in the broader public sector by proposing certain mandatory procurement activities such as collaborative purchasing.

We'll propose to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze MPP salaries at their current level for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

We'll limit salary increases for deputy ministers and senior managers earning \$150,000 or more during 2009-10.

And we'll reduce the size of the Ontario public service by 5% over the next three years through attrition and other measures.

The 2009 budget helps Ontario families weather this economic storm, but frankly it does much more than that. This budget invests in infrastructure and skills training to

create jobs and help Ontario workers get the skills they need to succeed. This budget supports the most vulnerable Ontarians in these particularly challenging economic times. This budget helps develop new opportunities in the green economy. This budget invests in innovation. The McGuinty government is proposing a comprehensive tax reform package that includes moving to a single sales tax on July 1, 2010, and providing tax relief for people and for businesses.

The 2009 budget announces significant measures to preserve and create jobs today. Proposed initiatives will help people through this tricky economic environment while also enabling Ontarians to contribute to the province's future competitiveness by enhancing our infrastructure base, investing in the skills and knowledge of our workforce and supporting key sectors of our economy.

These actions build on the significant investments that the McGuinty government has made since 2003. Our government is investing \$34 billion over the next two years as a relatively short-term stimulus to encourage economic growth and to help Ontario families. This stimulus represents 2.9% of our gross domestic product, which is above the minimum recommendation from the International Monetary Fund for short-term stimulus action. We are looking not only in Ontario, to our federal government and abroad, but looking at international indicators for the nature of the investments that we should be making as an economic stimulus package.

This stimulus package is not only significant in its size, but it also meets the key criteria of being timely, being targeted and being temporary. Strategic infrastructure investments provide jobs in the short term as well as building a strong foundation for tomorrow. The McGuinty government is allocating \$32.5 billion for infrastructure projects over the next two years. These will support an estimated 146,000 jobs in 2009-10 and some 168,000 jobs during the period of 2010-11.

This includes a record \$648 million in 2009-10 for provincial highway projects in northern Ontario: ongoing widening to four lanes of Highway 69 to Sudbury and Highway 11 to North Bay. Certainly these improvements will be well received by those who use that highway, whether it be as part of a commute, for recreation, or most importantly, for the purpose of transporting goods and services for business purposes.

These expenditures will include the widening of Highway 11 and 17 near Thunder Bay. As I said earlier, I'm sure that the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan will want to reflect on what this is going to mean for his communities.

We're also investing additional funds to improve resource access roads, remote airports, winter road networks and the remediation of the Mid-Canada Line radar sites.

These investments build on our government's \$30-billion ReNew Ontario infrastructure investment plan, which will be completed in the 2008-09 time frame, a full year ahead of what had been our scheduled plan. In fact,

the province has more than 30 major infrastructure projects under way, each worth more than \$100 million. I think it's worth repeating: across this province, 30 major infrastructure projects worth more than \$100 million each.

I can speak to just one of those within the broader jurisdiction of where my riding is—the Durham consolidated courthouse, a very significant provincial infrastructure initiative that was planned, implemented and is currently under construction.

Among those shovel-ready projects that are set to go across the province, we're looking to rehabilitate social housing, including energy efficiency improvements and the creation of new affordable housing units for lower-income families, seniors and particularly persons with disabilities. Provincial highway and bridge projects in northern Ontario, the Kitchener-Waterloo region, the Niagara region, Guelph and Brantford certainly are all included.

This is not a comprehensive list by any means, but it does point out some of the priorities and some of the geographical distribution nature of the expenditures that are being made.

Municipal developments, which would include libraries and local transportation projects, are also on the list of initiatives to be undertaken with this infrastructure funding. New medical school spaces, strengthened post-secondary infrastructure, modernized facilities at Ontario's colleges and universities and additional support for research and infrastructure are also to be considered within the infrastructure envelope. We'll also be making capital investments to support and enhance the tourism sector.

The McGuinty government understands the economic benefits of a highly skilled and educated workforce. It's a cornerstone to our future economic growth. That's why this budget allocates nearly \$700 million over two years in new skills training, literacy initiatives and enhancements to existing programs to help workers get the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.

But it's a serious problem that 70% of unemployed Ontarians do not receive regular employment insurance benefits. We need the federal government to ensure that Ontarians have equitable access to the EI program, especially during these particular economic times.

Recognizing the employment challenges faced by our youth in this difficult economic time, we're also increasing spending on summer jobs. We're extending that expenditure for youth by 57% to nearly \$90 million in the 2009 year, helping more than 100,000 young people get summer jobs. That would be an increase of approximately 25% from the 73,000 that were supported last year.

0920

Our government is also committed to partnering with key sectors to help them become more competitive so they continue to make major contributions to Ontario's economy. Our budget announces support for key Ontario sectors, which include manufacturing, forest products, mining, agriculture and small business.

Our government is committed to improving the quality of life for Ontarians, particularly those who are most vulnerable in our community. Giving everyone a fair chance to succeed is the right thing to do; it's the right thing to do for our society and it's the right thing to do for our economy. The current economic environment has made immediate measures to support vulnerable Ontarians and families even more critical. As part of an aggressive strategy to help families being hurt by this recession, we're accelerating the poverty reduction strategy by proposing to speed up the phase-in of the Ontario child benefit a full two years ahead of schedule—and what better way to help support low- and middle-income families than through the enhancement of the Ontario child benefit? This would provide lower- and middle-income families with up to \$1,100 annually per child starting in July 2009, almost doubling the \$600 they receive now and expanding eligibility to almost 115,000 more families than in 2008.

Additional aspects of the 2009 budget's poverty reduction strategy include doubling the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax credit, as announced in the 2008 budget, so that low- and middle-income seniors living in their own homes would get up to \$500 in support for their property taxes starting in 2010, helping more than 600,000 seniors over the next five years. We want to continue working with the federal government to invest \$1.2 billion over the next two years to construct new affordable housing and rehabilitate existing social housing. We're increasing Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits; we're helping low-income tenants avoid eviction by providing more than \$5 million annually in stable funding for municipal rent banks; and we're raising the minimum wage to \$9.50, which became effective on March 31, our sixth increase since 2003. Additional support for seniors includes further enhancing the Ontario property and sales tax credits to ensure that senior couples who receive the guaranteed minimum level of income from governments would receive the full benefits from these credits.

I'm mindful of the time we have available to us this morning, and particularly mindful of the fact that my colleagues from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Eglinton–Lawrence want the opportunity to address this Legislature with respect to the 2009 budget measures bill.

We're going to keep investing in innovation. We're going to keep investing in the skills and education of our workers in this province. We're going to keep investing in the infrastructure, in lowering business costs and in developing those partnerships. We're going to keep investing in those who are vulnerable in our communities, and if changing circumstances demand it, we'll change our plan to make it stronger still.

I would certainly ask at the end of this debate, when it's finished, for the members here to support Bill 162 so that we can move forward with this plan so we can invest in Ontario, so that we can invest particularly in Ontarians, so that we can create jobs and improve the competitiveness for tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member indicated that he was sharing his time, I understand, and therefore I recognize the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for Pickering–Scarborough East for sharing his time this morning, and to remind the Speaker that I'll also be sharing the remaining 40 minutes or so with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak to our budget bill. As most know, when you present a budget in the Legislature you are presenting a document that obviously is the result of attempting to balance a whole wide range of competing interests. As a government, I suppose one of the measures you use to try to get a sense of whether or not you've been able to strike an appropriate balance is the responses that you get from members of the opposing parties. I know that when Minister Duncan was presenting the budget here in the Legislature approximately a week or a week and a half ago, we immediately began to see remarks coming from members of the opposing parties that I think, as a member of the government, indicated to us clearly that perhaps we had struck a pretty fair and appropriate balance in terms of the package that we were able to bring forward.

We heard from the members of the official opposition the fact that perhaps the budget went too far; in fact, described as a left-leaning budget by some members of the official opposition. And we heard the members of the third party indicating that to them, perhaps the budget had gone too far, was too much of a right-leaning budget and smacked of the Mike Harris days. So, as a member of the government side, I think it's probably appropriate for us to draw a conclusion that perhaps we came close to striking an appropriate balance in terms of the package that we brought forward in our budget.

We brought forward some pretty radical pieces that we think are necessary under the current situation and economic circumstances that we find ourselves in. One of the parts that I'm especially gratified about is the corporate income tax reductions, especially for the manufacturing sector. As people who have followed this budget closely will know, we have introduced reductions in two corporate taxes: the general corporate tax rate and the manufacturing corporate tax rate.

As I'm sure that most members of this Legislature and members of the public who are interested will be aware, the forestry sector, one that I'm very interested in, has found itself in very difficult economic circumstances. The reduction of the manufacturing tax rate from 12% to 10%, an approximate 14% reduction for them, as well as the elimination of the capital tax, is obviously going to put them in a much better position to compete on a go-forward basis.

I think this is something that the members of the official opposition have found themselves now in a position of expressing a bit of concern about, because clearly these are policies that they were in support of for quite

some time, leading up to the presentation of the budget, and now have found themselves—some of them, at least—in the position of arguing against, which is a bit of a surprise.

Members of the third party, as well, I think, were almost a bit disappointed when we introduced a measure that's going to almost double, as was said already this morning, the Ontario child benefit, from about \$50 a month per child to almost \$100 a month per child—a doubling of the Ontario child benefit fully two years ahead of schedule. Clearly, it's something that we're very proud of over here on this side of the House. It's not the only poverty reduction measure that we continue to move forward on during very difficult economic circumstances, but obviously, I think it's one of the most significant pieces that we can move forward on. Quite frankly, I think there are a lot of people in the Legislature, and even in the community, interested in these issues who thought, given the circumstances that we find ourselves in, that the poverty reduction strategy may have been a piece that was pushed to the side. We're all very proud on this side of the House that in fact that was not the case.

We also heard in the budget a part that I'm very excited about: the continued commitment—and I want to underline that—the continued commitment to an investment in infrastructure in the province of Ontario. When we came to government in 2003, we all talked quite regularly about what we felt were three deficits that we inherited: a fiscal deficit, a service deficit and an infrastructure deficit. And we have, since 2003, I think most members would acknowledge, been investing significantly in infrastructure in the province. Our ReNew Ontario program—\$30 billion—has been met and completed, and the budget document brought forward a further commitment of \$32.5 billion, \$27 billion of that being provincial money that will be expended over the next two years. Clearly, this money is going to go a long way to maintaining and creating jobs in the province of Ontario. I think we can all look within our own ridings for a lot of examples—personal, local examples—of projects that have occurred over the last four, five or six years that have significantly created jobs and met infrastructure demands that, quite frankly, for a long time were going unmet. Obviously, this infrastructure is necessary for our businesses to remain competitive, so I, for one, am thrilled that this commitment is still there.

We are hearing now from most national governments and subnational governments, I think, all across the globe that one of the things they can do to get us through this difficult economic circumstance that we find ourselves in is to invest in infrastructure. Our budget is doing that, but once again, I think it's important to underline that our government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, had identified infrastructure investments fully six years ago. While we continue that support for infrastructure investment in the province of Ontario through our last budget, I really do want to remind people that we've been there for the past six years, since our election in 2003. We're hearing everybody else talk about it now, but I

really want to mention that for us, this has been a six-year commitment. It's especially important for me as a northern and a rural member who is responsible for several small municipalities. I look at communities in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan like Oliver Paipoonge, Neebing, Conmee, O'Connor, Gillies and Atikokan—very small communities of 2,000, 3,000, 5,000 people. But the determining factor for those communities is that they all manage extremely large land bases, and on those land bases that they manage as municipal organizations, they have very small tax bases from which to support their infrastructure requirements.

0930

So I'm very thrilled that our infrastructure investments over the last six years and going forward now, as exhibited by our \$32.5-billion recommendation here in this budget, will continue to help those smaller communities, especially in northern Ontario, meet their competitive needs through infrastructure investment, and also help residents in those smaller communities maintain reasonable and affordable tax rates. Without this investment from our government, (a) those tax rates would have to go through the roof to support those infrastructure investments or (b) quite likely their municipal councils would simply make decisions not to make those infrastructure investments because, quite frankly, they wouldn't be able to afford them.

The member for Pickering—Scarborough East also spoke a little bit in his comments about our continued commitment to public services. I think that under the situation we find ourselves in, many people in the Legislature and in the public were afraid. They were worried that our long-standing six-year commitment to public services would not continue to receive the support that it has since we formed government in 2003, especially health care and education—core public services that people rely on. We know today, as a result of the budget that was introduced a week and a half ago, that is not the case; that we will continue to make those key investments in public services, we will continue to provide them an increased amount of resources so they can continue to provide the services that we all rely on.

I know that in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan we have seen significant investments in the health care field. I had an opportunity about a week ago to run into the CEO at a hospital event in Thunder Bay. Actually, Justin Trudeau was in town and we had a wonderful fundraiser. They raised significant money for the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation at that event. I had an opportunity to talk to the CEO and, I must tell you, he came up to me in an unsolicited nature and thanked me for the investment our government continues to make in the health care field. I think he was very concerned, given these difficult circumstances, that we might see reductions that would result in significant layoffs. Of course, that hasn't been the case.

I know seniors in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan were thrilled as well, because many of them have been the recipients of an incredible amount of resources that

we pumped into the health care sector. Of course, they are the ones who are benefiting from increased access to more cataracts, more hips and knees, more MRIs, more cancer and cardiac interventions. I know they are thrilled to see that is going to continue.

I want to mention a bit, as the member for Pickering—Scarborough East had as well, about where we find ourselves when it comes to our fiscal situation. For five and a half years now we've actually paid down debt in the province of Ontario. The debt is now lower than it was when we came to government. We've paid off the \$5.6-billion deficit that we inherited when we came and have run three or four balanced budgets since we formed government in Ontario. We find ourselves this year anticipating about a \$3.9-billion deficit, and of course this has been the subject of some debate. I think it's obvious for all of us that nobody is interested in going into deficit but I don't hear anybody suggesting that there was necessarily a way around it this time. We're finding ourselves in very challenging situations. We know that people are counting on continued investments in key public services and we have some challenges, obviously, in terms of managing this deficit on a go-forward basis. But I do know that when we look south of the border and find out what is going on in the United States and many other national and subnational jurisdictions on the planet, most people have not found themselves with any other opportunity or option besides deficit financing. We continue to go forward with that under the appropriate measures of moving forward significantly with investments in our key sectors.

One of the things that I found and was very happy to see in our budget, one of the things that I know we as northern members had lobbied for, was continued support for the forest industry, and not only in northwestern Ontario; it's a key, significant player all across the province but clearly has more of a presence in northern Ontario. Our budget contains significant pieces that will continue to support that industry on a go-forward basis. I was thrilled to see that we had some of those key investments still in there.

I have to tell you that over the course of the last three or four years or so, there's been a great effort made—I would say primarily by the members of the third party and their former leader—to try to paint Ontario as being the only jurisdiction that seems to be suffering when it comes to the loss of forestry jobs in Canada, or in North America. They have spent a fair bit of time trying to paint that picture and saying that it's only this government's fault for the reason for layoffs in the forest industry. Of course, people know that's not quite the case. I want to take a minute just to paint a bit of a picture, if I can, of what's gone on in other jurisdictions in Canada in the forest industry, and tie it back into the resources and the support that we've provided in our budget to continue to try to help this industry get through this very difficult economic time.

As I said, the two jurisdictions in Canada that probably most closely parallel Ontario when it comes to the

forest industry are Quebec and BC. They are the only other two jurisdictions that have a forest industry that's on the scale and size of that which exists in Ontario. If you do even the most cursory bit of effort to try to find out what's gone on in both British Columbia and Quebec, it becomes pretty apparent to people that those jurisdictions, which are on a similar scale and size to Ontario, have had, if not similar challenges, more egregious challenges than have actually occurred in Ontario.

The former leader of the third party was in the House the other day speaking on this and he ran off this long litany of communities in northern Ontario. He rhymed them off and announced the mill closure in every one. We're aware of that, and we know that, but what he tries to do is portray that as being the only jurisdiction that has the problem. Here are some of the jurisdictions in BC: AbitibiBowater in Mackenzie; Domtar in New Westminster; Cascadia Forest Products in Nanaimo; Domtar in New Westminster; Abitibi in Mackenzie, two mills; Canfor Upper Fraser mill in BC, Canfor Taylor mill; Weyerhaeuser Vavenby mill in Clearwater—all in BC. The list in BC—the most recent list that we've been able to get our hands on—clearly shows that in British Columbia, their forestry sector has closed 57 mills since 2003 with a job loss approaching 12,000 people. British Columbia has actually seen more mill closures and more job losses than has the province of Ontario. But if you listen to the former leader of the third party, of course he would have you believe—anybody who is interested in this issue in the province of Ontario—that there are only mills closing in Ontario and nowhere else in Canada.

If we look to our neighbour Quebec, which is very fortunate in terms of the energy costs that they're able to provide to their industry, here's what has gone on in Quebec: Tembec in Matane, pulp mill closed; Kruger, Trois-Rivières, specialty papers closed; AbitibiBowater, Donnacona, paper closed; AbitibiBowater, Shawinigan, paper closed; Kruger, Trois-Rivières, specialty paper closed; Kruger in Trois-Rivières, closed; Domtar, Gatineau, closed; Bowater, Dolbeau, closed; Bowater, Dolbeau, newsprint closed; Bowater, Gatineau, closed; Kruger pulp mill, Trois-Rivières, closed; Cascades, kraft pulp in Jonquière, closed; Cascades, Saint-Jérôme, fine paper closed; Tembec, Saint-Raymond, specialty paper closed; Kimberly-Clark, Saint-Hyacinthe, pulp and paper closed; Domtar, closed. The list goes on and on—another five Krugers, another three AbitibiBowaters, another several Domtars and Tembec, and the list goes on and on. In Quebec, almost 9,000 job losses in their forest industry with about 55 or 60 pulp and paper and sawmills closed.

If we listen to the former leader of the third party, he doesn't want people in Ontario, and especially northwestern Ontario, to know that's the situation because he spent a lot of time over the last three or four years trying to convince people in northwestern Ontario that the only place that there is a challenge in the forest industry is in Ontario, and that the only place that there is a problem—it's been laid at the feet of our government as if there was some magic wand that we would wave.

0940

We have brought significant resource to this sector and our budget continued that support. We bring forward a continued and enhanced energy rebate program for those large pulp and paper companies operating in the province, which will provide them with \$18 per megawatt—this is a significant resource—a rebate of \$18 per megawatt of energy for those large pulp and paper mills still operating in the province of Ontario.

While the focus in northwestern Ontario has often been primarily on energy, it's important to remind people that that is not the only support that we brought to the forestry sector over the course of the last three or four years. The other support that we brought forward has been continued in the budget. In 1992 or 1993, the responsibility for the construction and maintenance of primary and secondary roads in Ontario for the forestry sector was downloaded on to the backs of the companies by the NDP government of the day. That was about 16 or 17 years ago that the NDP made a decision that now, sawmill companies and pulp and paper companies in Ontario, it was going to be your cost to bear: the construction and maintenance of primary and secondary roads in the province of Ontario. We took that cost back about three years ago.

Until 2004 or 2005, when we uploaded the cost from the forestry companies, about a 12- or 14-year period existed during which the forestry companies had the responsibility for those road networks, as downloaded to them by the New Democratic Party. I don't know how many tens of millions of dollars, if not hundreds of millions, that took out of the pockets of forestry companies over that 14- or 15-year period, but I can tell you, it was likely significant. In the last three years, that roads program alone contributed close to \$225 million, the roads uploading program that our government brought in.

While we often focus on and spend most of our time discussing the energy piece—and I've outlined briefly for you some of the resource that we have provided for energy support in the province—we have also, over the course of the last three or four years, brought significant help to them in terms of uploading the costs of primary and secondary construction and maintenance off the backs of those companies, and this budget continues that support for that particular piece.

Finally in the budget, we have continued the stumpage rate reductions on a couple of different species in the province of Ontario for forestry companies, which is going to significantly enhance their ability to stay competitive as well.

As I mentioned earlier, in British Columbia, 57 closures and almost 12,000 people laid off in that industry; in Quebec, well over 8,000 people laid off in the industry, and 56 closures; in Ontario, 43 closures, with under 8,000 employees—obviously, a significant challenge for forestry; obviously, lots of people directly affected, experiencing job loss in industries that have been there for generations.

It's important that I highlight that our government has brought significant resource to support this industry, and

it's important that I highlight for people interested in this particular topic that it is not only Ontario that has faced the challenge in this industry, despite attempts to paint that as the picture over the course of the last three or four years. It is something that is affecting not only all jurisdictions engaged in forestry in Canada, but quite frankly, across the globe.

I see that my 20 minutes is up, and I'll now yield the floor to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will now recognize the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's very frustrating to have only 19 minutes to speak about so many good things in this budget.

I just want to compare what is happening in Ontario and what is happening in the rest of the world, and to understand that we are all globally connected. I just want to put the general international perspective into place.

Many times, we've talked about the global context of this economic meltdown, and it's something that we have to take into account because Ontario is a trading nation and depends on exporting its goods and services, goods especially. If you do a survey of the world, you'll see that the Celtic tiger—Ireland—for instance, is just going through its second budget in six months. It was the tax haven for all kinds of IT companies. Everybody was saying, "Ireland—we've got to copy, emulate Ireland. They have the answers." Well, Ireland is basically, as I've said, in deep, deep trouble.

Another model country was Iceland. Iceland is basically bankrupt. The only thing they're able to do now, their only industry that shows signs of life at all, is tourism. What they're doing in Iceland is, because the value of their currency has fallen so much, if you pick up the Toronto newspapers, television or web, you'll see all kinds of inducements to go to Iceland and buy cheap goods and services in Reykjavik. That's what they're reduced to. It's basically become like a big Walmart because of this economic collapse.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's not fair.

Mr. Mike Colle: No offence to Walmart. I didn't mean to downgrade Walmart—a lot of good jobs there.

In Hungary—and the socialists across the way will note this; I'm sure they're following closely—the socialist prime minister just resigned because the economy is collapsing in Hungary despite the IMF giving them hundreds of millions of dollars to stabilize their currency.

If you have friends or relatives in Britain, you will see the economy in Britain is in a tailspin like never seen before since the days of Clement Attlee. They've never been in such an economic slump.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Queen is pawning her jewels.

Mr. Mike Colle: To the point where, the socialist member from Welland says, the Queen is almost pawning her jewels, sad to say.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: And Michelle Obama is helping her out.

Anyways, if you look at Germany, which has one of the most sophisticated, cutting-edge economies, the green economy that we hope will be part of the future economy here in North America, the United States and Canada, despite having the cutting-edge green economy of the world, Germany's economy is in deep, deep trouble: unemployment like you've never seen before in Germany. With all its wind turbines, with all its solar energy infrastructure, with all its innovation, Germany is in serious, serious trouble.

In France there's massive labour unrest. That's what is happening in France. The workers are losing their jobs, cutbacks etc. There's serious labour unrest in France.

If we go to California, the most prosperous, incredible, iconic state of California, we know that they were \$18 billion short. They had to be bailed out in terms of survival in California. That's where the American dream is: "Go west, young man." You can't even go to California.

We also have Michigan. You saw the documentary on CBC the other day where you could buy a beautiful two-storey brick home in a nice neighbourhood in Detroit, a reasonable neighbourhood, for \$500. For a two-storey brick home in a reasonable neighbourhood in Detroit, for \$500 they were trying to sell homes.

In China, 25 million people at last count lost their jobs in the last month—up to 25 million people.

In Alberta, the great oil-rich province of Alberta, all of a sudden their royalties are literally drying up—oil at \$50 a barrel. It's on the brink of recession. And BC, the great province of BC.

The other provinces of Canada: Some of them are doing quite well because they're getting equalization money from Ontario. We're still helping Nova Scotia. We're still helping Prince Edward Island. New Brunswick was able to lower taxes with Ontario's money. That's great that they're able to survive somehow with Ontario's money.

But if you look at the whole world, we are in unprecedented times. This is economic climate change.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Capitalism. How do you like it so far?

Mr. Mike Colle: Capitalism is on its deathbed, many say, because of many, many reasons that I won't go into.

The context of this budget has to be understood. This is not an Ontario problem. This is not a Canadian problem. This is not Prime Minister Stephen Harper's problem. It is not Premier McGuinty's problem. It is all of our problem. Every country and every jurisdiction, national and subnational, faces the same horrendous challenge of how we provide goods and services to our populations, and at the same time create a new economy, at the same time balance our books, at the same time create research and innovation that creates jobs for the future.

0950

No one really has the answer. I think everybody has parts of the answer, and those who claim they have the solution are either living in a fool's paradise or they're totally unrealistic. The best and brightest people in the United States, in Europe, in Asia—in the whole world—

are trying to grapple with this unprecedented economic climate change. Look at Japan. The incredible economy of Japan is almost at a standstill. Taiwan, which was an economic powerhouse, is caught in this economic climate change.

So what we've tried to do here in Ontario is to deal with the real challenges that face the world and the real challenges that face Ontario. We know full well that if the United States does well, they will be buying Canadian lumber, Canadian paper products and Canadian trucks. But we cannot survive on our own here in Canada or in Ontario. We need the help of the Americans, and we hope and pray that their economy, the English economy and the EU economy will rebound. So we are trying to do the best we can in unprecedented circumstances that have baffled the world's best economists and brightest minds and leaders. Whether it's Gordon Brown in England or Barack Obama in the United States, no one has a clear vision because this economic meltdown is so unprecedented.

We've tried to take the best ideas of what they are doing in other countries and jurisdictions. One of the consensus issues is that one of the things you can do to get us through the economy is invest in infrastructure. So in this budget there's an unprecedented investment in infrastructure. When we talk about infrastructure, it means building sewers. I know it's not very sexy or newsworthy, but we have to rebuild and build sewers throughout this province in many of our urban areas, and that creates jobs. We have to repair and build bridges; that creates jobs for men and women. We have to repair and build roads and schools. We have to invest in our public transportation system.

That's what we've committed to in this budget: \$32 billion over two years in providing good jobs for men and women who have the ability to work. As you know, in Ontario, when it comes to construction and building—I know that the member from Durham appreciates this—we have some of the most talented and skilled men and women, whether it be designers, engineers, draftsmen, machine operators or people who operate tunnel boring machinery; we have the world's best workers when it comes to construction, bar none in the world. They can match their skills, their work ethic and their engineering capacity with any workers in the world.

We are going to encourage them, with this budget, to rebuild our roads, bridges, sewers, hospitals, schools and public transit so that they're building this infrastructure, which puts money into the economy. That money in the economy will mean that those plumbers—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Durham doesn't care about the plumbers, but if the plumbers get a job, if Josephine the plumber gets a job, Josephine the plumber is going to be able to buy shoes for her children, gasoline for her car and groceries at the corner store. That keeps the corner store operator in business; it keeps the shoe-maker in business; it keeps the economy active because Josephine the plumber has a good-paying job. That's the

way it works. Whether it's Josephine the plumber, the engineer or the construction worker at Local 183, when they work, they buy groceries, they buy shoes and they buy furniture, if they need it.

The important thing is to make sure that our skilled labour, whether they're in Sarnia or in Scarborough, get a chance to work, whether they get a chance to work in building public transit or in repairing our housing stock. The Minister of Housing has fought for the federal government in partnership, and they've agreed to partner in providing \$1.5 billion of money for jobs in repairing public housing. Our drywall workers, our plumbers, our carpenters and our sheet metal workers will retrofit the energy systems in our public housing, they will repair the washrooms and they will repair the hallways and the roofs. These are good-paying jobs for working people. This infrastructure money which is in this budget—\$1.5 billion in housing infrastructure alone over two years—means good jobs for highly skilled workers who we have in this province.

Again, the investment in public transit is not only an investment in moving people, it's also an investment in revitalizing neighbourhoods and spurring development. If you fly over Toronto or look at a map of Toronto, where there are major investments in public transit, you'll see that there are apartment buildings, office buildings and there are workplaces because of the access to public transit. If you look at a map of Toronto, all up and down Yonge Street you'll see the concentration of people, apartments and workplaces. If you look along Bloor and the Danforth, you'll see the same thing. The Danforth line—you'll see that's where people want to live and that's where people want to work, so property values improve and increase. People want to live near public transit. You not only get jobs in building those light rail cars or in digging those tunnels, you also get jobs in building apartment buildings and in building and retrofitting neighbourhoods when you invest in public transit.

If you look up Yonge Street at Finch and up at Sheppard, you'll see the Mel Lastman miracle. North York used to be basically a farmer's field at Sheppard and Yonge, but because of Mel Lastman's vision and his battle to bring public transit into North York, you'll see at Yonge and Sheppard an amazing metropolis—because of that investment in public transit. There were jobs not only for the subway workers; there were also jobs for all the men and women who were building those towers, those apartment buildings and office towers, in the Yonge and Sheppard hub.

That's why this investment that our government is going to make in public transit—along Eglinton Avenue; in Scarborough, rebuilding the SRT; in the Finch line that goes from Humber College in the west all the way out to Don Mills in the east; all along the Finch corridor; and all along Eglinton Avenue—would not only be jobs for the next number of years for the men and women who will lay the track, dig the tunnels, dig the right of way; it will be jobs in the related spinoff industries of building apartments and retrofitting neighbourhood homes. People

will gravitate towards those investments. So there are not just the jobs in public transit. There are going to be more jobs for the Amalgamated Transit Union, there are going to be more jobs, obviously, for the people in the construction trades, but also all the related support services, plus the economic spinoffs in the neighbourhoods. The investment that we're making here in public transit is an investment in the future vitality of cities.

The investment in York region: We sometimes don't pay enough attention to the incredible dynamism in York region. The city of Vaughan, for instance, is almost 300,000 people. They need better public transit, and one of the investments we're making is the bus right of way with Viva in York region that connects York region through public transit. That means people will be able to get to work and people will be able to invest in those transit routes as they're being built in York region.

Brampton: As I've said before, Brampton is one of the largest cities in Canada right now—600,000 people in Brampton. We're investing in Brampton.

Mississauga: There are one million people in Mississauga.

These are cities that need this kind of infrastructure investment so they can continue to provide employment and transportation. The GO expansion is another incredibly good investment that we have in this budget, because where there are GO stations, you take pressure off the roads and you revitalize and expand neighbourhoods.

1000

So these are the incredibly important decisions that were made in this budget, and I'm sure the Minister of Finance knows that there's much more work to do. Given the fact that we're in this unprecedented economic meltdown, there's something very substantive in investing in infrastructure, and there are many other investments we're making, like in public housing and in the energy retrofit investments we're making. These are important investments as we get through these troubled times. Those investments that we make in public transit and housing—those rail lines for public transit, those subway stations, those retrofitted public housing buildings—will be there for the next generation. So you've got an asset that's going to continue to be there because the investment is going to be made now.

The basic thrust of the budget, as I said, is to try to get us through these troubled times by infrastructure investments. Yes, there is deficit financing here, but as I challenged the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka yesterday when I said, "Name me one jurisdiction in the world that isn't into deficit financing," he could not name one. He knows that every country in the world is faced with the same daunting task. That's why even Prime Minister Harper, to his credit, who claimed about a year ago that there would be no deficit, saw that the economic climate change was coming and recognized that he would have to go into \$56 billion in deficit too. That's what is happening to all the ideological, you might say, governments of the world. Ireland talked about great capitalism,

Iceland, great capitalism, but everybody realizes now that there's no more room for straitjacket ideological perspectives.

We have to look at the reality. That's why we've worked with Prime Minister Harper, because he knows that Ontario is critical in the future recovery of this country. The government in Ottawa knows, like we know here, that the public has no room for partisanship when the economy is in such troubled times. That's why we're working with Ottawa in infrastructure; we're working with Ottawa in modernizing our competitiveness. We have to do that. So I'm glad to see we're getting that co-operation, and I hope this budget will get us through these tough times. I have the greatest of faith that this is a budget that really tries to do what needs to be done. There is no magic solution, but I think it really does a great job of bringing in pragmatism, initiatives of investment and infrastructure, dealing with, again, a very challenging time so we can keep people working and keep food on the table and continue to grow for the next generation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I listened intently to the three members of the government side who spoke over the last hour. I want to apologize to my mother. She thought I was going to speak in the last hour, and we didn't know the government was going to take an hour, so some other day I'll speak on the budget.

What I want to talk about is the politics of this. Dalton McGuinty in the 2003 election is on the TV in our living rooms, saying, "I won't raise your taxes," and what does he do? He brings in the largest single tax increase at that time of \$2.3 billion in new health taxes. He's chronic. Now we have another election in 2007, and just about as many months after the election he does the same thing. After saying, "I won't raise your taxes, but I won't lower them either"—that was the caveat—this time, in the 2007 election—

Mr. John O'Toole: He's a serial liar.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just a few months later, just about the same timing as he brought in the health tax, he brings in now, again, the largest—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member from Durham should withdraw that statement. Will you stand up and withdraw?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard it too and I ask the member for Durham to withdraw the unparliamentary remark he made.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, of course.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have to stand up and say, "I withdraw."

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now that I'm up, I think the member from this side is true in his responses. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay, I'll ask the member from Durham one more time. You have to—

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I'll return to the member for Simcoe-Grey, who now has a few seconds.

Mr. Jim Wilson: A short point: I don't know how these Liberal backbenchers can face their constituents. You say one thing in the election, then you bring in historic tax increases. The big issue in the election was taxes and finances. We could see the economy starting to deteriorate. We were warning you on this side of the House to take certain measures. If you want to help the manufacturing sector, help the manufacturing sector. Don't drag every senior citizen and every citizen in this province by increasing basic groceries, haircuts, electricity and hundreds of items by 8%. You didn't campaign on that. Shame on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: If I say, "I withdraw," right at the onset, is that a marker for an inappropriate comment during the course of the two minutes?

Look, there's nothing in this budget for the 800 workers at John Deere who lost their jobs down in Welland when John Deere, after almost a century in Niagara region, closed up shop. The most glaring omission from this budget is a buy-Ontario policy. You've got a Premier whose buy-Ontario policy consists of telling people to eat an apple a day. I'm a big fan of Ontario apples but I'm an even bigger fan of Ontario manufacturing jobs.

The government brags about its infrastructure projects; God bless. Many of them are recycled announcements. But that money being spent means nothing unless and until we have guarantees that it's not only going to employ Ontario workers, but that it's also going to utilize products—pipe, iron, steel and machinery—built here in Ontario.

The demise of the manufacturing sector isn't just a modest inconvenience or a blip. The manufacturing sector is the wealth-creating sector. The service sector doesn't create wealth. That's what Ireland, the Celtic tiger, learned. It's only when you have value-added manufacturing that you create wealth. Casinos don't create wealth. They simply separate people from their wealth. It's in the manufacturing sector where you have the value-added component with which you create wealth.

I have a great deal of affection for the last speaker, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, but far be it from me to suggest that this is the death of capitalism. This is capitalism exactly where it was intended to be. Capitalism: How do you like it so far? Globalization: Has it been good to you too? Because it sure as heck hasn't been good to the workers down where I come from.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to rise today in support of the government's budget, a budget that is going to reduce corporate income taxes by over \$4 billion, reduce personal income taxes by over \$10 billion, and at the end of the day make our businesses more competitive. The

most important thing a government can do in a recession is to stimulate the economy and level the playing field for our businesses to become more competitive in the global economy, so that they in fact can hire more people, hire more of our fellow citizens, many of whom are facing difficult times. As a result of record investments in infrastructure dollars, municipalities, hospitals, post-secondary institutions and schools, we'll be able to retrofit buildings from an environmental and an energy efficiency point of view. They will be able to hire more people in the skilled trades.

In my own community, in Ottawa, I'm proud of the fact that we were able to deliver a significant amount of infrastructure money last year, through the Investing in Ontario Act: \$77 million. It's going to help clean up the Ottawa River, build more affordable housing and invest in our transit system. All of these capital projects are going to create jobs and get our fellow citizens back to work.

We're investing \$35 million in skilled trades building at Algonquin College in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean. Why? Not only is it the right thing to do, but because we have an aging workforce. We need skilled tradespeople—carpenters, electricians and drywallers—to get their certifications so they can go out and work on these important investments.

We've also invested in public transit through the gas tax. The city of Ottawa benefited to the tune of over \$36 million to help support OC Transpo.

The personal income taxes are going to put money in people's pockets so they can go and invest in retail businesses throughout our city.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we listen to the members opposite, we reflect on three themes, really: taxing, spending and borrowing. As far as taxing, and this issue was raised by the member from Simcoe-Grey, we all will never forget the so-called health tax, the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario. And, yes, I guess it was two elections ago that Mr. McGuinty came into our living rooms and looked us in the eye and indicated, "I will not raise your taxes." He even signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, a piece that turned out essentially to be not worth the paper it was written on.

Very recently, this government now has hit the little guy and the little gal with the so-called harmonized tax, a 13% tax, as we know, on just about everything from coffee to coffins, soup to nuts to gym memberships. The harmonized tax: I think of it as a tax that will probably cause more harm than harmony.

I'm pleased that the forest sector was raised again. We all know of the devastation across northern Ontario, not only in recent times but over a number of years. When we talk about the forest industry, we come to realize there's a difference between the budget speech and the actual budget. The budget speech talks about a 16.7% corporate income tax rate cut for the forest industry and other sectors. If you look at the budget, that 16.7% cut is

not in that budget. We will wait for next year's budget. There's a promise that it will be in next year's budget, and we'll just have to take this government on their word.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the available time for questions and comments. I now return to one of the government members to respond, and I recognize again the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I thank the members for their input. I may disagree with it, but I really appreciate the input.

I just want to say one thing, and that is that when we talk about jobs that are, for instance, in public transportation and transit, building subways or streetcars, I know that people in Thunder Bay are happy because those subway cars get built in Thunder Bay. The steel for the subway cars, the steel for the tracks, the steel for the tunnel-boring machinery comes from Hamilton. If they're building subways in Toronto, the sand and gravel comes from the GTA, so the people driving the cement trucks will have jobs. I don't want to see the cement trucks lying idle like I don't want to see the steel plants lying idle. They are good manufacturing jobs because of the investment we're making.

Housing: The wood that will be used in the retrofit, the drywall, the plumbing materials, that will come from other parts of the province. So this investment has a spinoff effect that is important in jobs.

Not everybody can work in a plant. The 9,000 men and women who drive streetcars and buses for the TTC don't manufacture things—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Nobody's working in plants.

Mr. Mike Colle: —but they work very hard.

And the socialist member from Welland doesn't stand up for those 9,000 workers or the 400,000 workers who work in the banks and the insurance companies in the GTA. The over 400,000 men and women who bring a paycheque back to Hamilton, back to Mississauga, appreciate that job in that insurance company because it puts food on the table.

Everybody needs the support—the manufacturing sector, but don't forget people who work in offices and people who drive subway cars or drive buses. They are also part of our economy, and we tried to help as much as we can. Let's pull together as a province through these tough times.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to introduce the family of Everett Kehew, who is page captain today. In the west members' gallery are his father, Bill Kehew; his mother, Helen Mackenzie; and his sister, Jessie. On behalf of all the members here, I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Shortly to arrive at the west gallery is the family of page Renée Bongers, and that is Maria Thorburn and Alistair Thorburn, who are her aunt and cousin, respectively.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce a number of grade 10 students from one of the great schools in Davenport: Oakwood Collegiate. They're about to arrive, so congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and page Victoria Carney, we'd like to welcome her father, Brian Carney, here today.

As well, on behalf of the leader of the official opposition, some additional guests of Renée Bongers: her mother, Christine; her father, John; and her brothers Lucas and Ian, along with her aunt and cousin, who were just recently introduced.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. It's clear that Ontario is in a recession and it's clear that this government has no plan. On this side of the House we offered suggestions prior to the budget in terms of a plan that would actually stimulate the economy and get money into consumers' hands. We proposed a very specific program with regard to auto sales—a tax holiday on vehicles and the retire-your-ride program. The Minister of Finance said that this wouldn't work.

Here are the facts: In Germany, from January 14 to March 31, 600,000 new cars were sold under that program; €2,500 to retire your ride. It was so successful that they've extended the program to the end of May.

I'd like to know from the Minister of Finance why he refuses to implement a very practical program that would encourage auto sales in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did take a close look at it. We looked at it both in the context of Ontario's experience with it and in the context of the European experience with it. What we found was that while it did raise, as I indicated to the member opposite, sales in the shortened period—when that incentive was on—as soon as the incentive came off, the sales went back, and overall sales did not improve.

We have taken a number of measures that have been endorsed by the automotive manufacturers and by Canadian manufacturers, including substantial corporate tax cuts. We believe that that is the proper mix to respond to the enormous challenges facing the global economy today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Premier, I want to ask this simple question. The evidence is there that incentives work. This

government chose not to use incentives; rather, they brought down in this House a harmonized sales tax proposal that taxes everything and everybody in this province. Rather than provide incentives, you're slapping the biggest tax on the people of this province they've ever seen. Everything from funerals to haircuts will be taxed. People on fixed incomes, who are already struggling to keep their homes, are now going to be faced with this government's gift of a tax slam against them.

I'd like to ask the Premier this simple question: Why, when other jurisdictions around the world are providing incentives to consumers to help bring their jurisdictions out of recession, does he insist on slapping people with a tax in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to remind the member opposite, in fact there is a large tax cut here for consumers and businesses: \$10.6 billion in personal tax cuts, \$4.5 billion in corporate tax cuts, in addition to the billions that we, as a government, have invested in maintaining and preserving jobs in the auto sector here in Ontario.

We have looked at what other jurisdictions have done in terms of the auto industry, and I'd like to remind the member opposite, this is the only subnational government in the world participating in automotive assistance. That's been lost on the member opposite and his colleagues. I would suggest the package we've negotiated with the federal Conservative government, the one that will help get this economy back to the type of growth it needs, is the right package. Those tax cuts for citizens, tax cuts for businesses are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: For the people and businesses of Ontario it's frightening. He knows full well, the minister does, that the tax cuts that he talks about, that he is spreading out across this province, don't even come close to meeting the gap that he's created between the affordability that people have to pay their mortgages, to get the daily expenses paid in their lives. Why will this minister not admit that his timing is all wrong, that what people in this province need is a government that understands they're struggling through these tough economic times, that he will set aside this incredible tax grab that he's putting on the people of Ontario and that he'll turn the page and move toward incentives rather than punishment? When will he do that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ninety-three per cent of Ontarians will see a permanent tax cut in their overall numbers. Revenues to the government of Ontario over the first four years will be down \$2.6 billion.

These are challenging times. Our government has put together a \$32.5-billion infrastructure plan to employ 300,000 people. My colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure will have more to say about that. In the longer term, we have taken the constructive measures that have been recommended by, I should say, virtually every economist and business. I think most Ontarians understand that it is these types of initiatives that must be

undertaken to get this economy back on track, to get us the growth we need to protect and enhance the vital public services that all Ontarians require.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakubuski: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the executive summary report was released from London Economics International. I'm sure you'd agree this is a very reputable firm in the energy sector. They shed some light on how you, Premier, and the Minister of Energy have kept people in the dark in terms of the effects of your so-called Green Energy Act. They've confirmed what we in the energy industry have been warning the government all along, and that is that businesses and consumers in this province will be hit with increases in their electricity bills of at least 15%, and as high as 50%. Was the Premier aware that this Green Energy Act would result in such a massive rate shock to residents and businesses who already are struggling in these difficult economic times?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that we did appreciate the interventions yesterday. I would say again to the honourable member, I'd be very happy to sit down with him and the team that his caucus has hired to try to compare the numbers.

There are three things that I would like to comment on related to that report. One is that it doesn't amortize the costs the way the costs are amortized in the electricity sector. If we make an investment in transmission that lasts for 50 years, we pay it over 50 years. It has a rate base impact over that time, but they've made different assumptions in the study. It does not give credit to electricity consumers for the benefits of conservation initiatives. It costs them against the consumers but it doesn't give them any credit for the reduced use that would flow, and it assumes, as an example, that the Green Energy Act would not displace any other projects or expenditures which might otherwise be contemplated. These are three examples where we think the report could be improved. I'd be happy to spend more time working with the honourable member on it.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Again to the Premier: We've discussed the real projected cost to consumers, including seniors and those on fixed incomes, and it's nothing close to what the Premier and the ministers have been suggesting. We know that the average bill is going to go up by at least 15 times what the minister's saying—and as much as 50 times what the minister is saying—because he said 1%. That's more than \$840 per year when you factor in the recent HST McGuinty tax grab.

Premier, why are you so focused on putting the economy of this province in peril, instead of being right and straight with Ontarians and letting them know the real cost of your spend-and-green disguise?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think part of our difficulty in having a discussion with the honourable member on this issue is that he's not even quite sure what his report says, and he's certainly not presenting consistently what I've said with respect to the pricing implications of the Green Energy Act. What we've said is that we think there will be a 1% per year increase associated with the implementation of the Green Energy Act. That's not 1%; that's 1% per year, and obviously that's very different than what the honourable member has presented.

At the heart of it, though, we also think it's important that the group hired by the opposition takes into consideration the opportunities for people in Ontario and here in this Legislature, in our government buildings and in our homes, to reduce the amount of electricity we use. A strong proportion of the cost associated with the Green Energy Act, and captured in its numbers, is for these very initiatives. Why don't they give the people the benefit of the reductions in the actual use of electricity?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In respect to what the minister has been saying, it's very difficult to present consistently inconsistency.

Ontarians are entitled to have the facts, not muddled waters. We've become, under your watch, a have-not province for the first time since Confederation. This is a time when we need to attract and retain investment, not scare it away with ever-increasing costs. It's clear from the responses outside of this Legislature that more cost-effective ways may exist and should be explored to achieve similar and higher amounts of avoided emissions and build a green economy. Are you willing to pull this legislation off the table, rethink and look at what's best for both the government and the economy and, most importantly, hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. George Smitherman: No, we won't be pulling the legislation back. We are, with the assistance of a legislative committee, looking for opportunities to enhance the bill, and I know that members on that committee are going to work hard to do so. We've always expressed our willingness to consider amendments as they come forward on numerous occasions. I've offered to meet with the honourable member to talk about those.

But he alluded in his question, I think rather vaguely, to the emerging policies of that party on energy. Are they, as six or seven of their members have said, in favour of the continuance, on a long-term basis, of coal? They were once against that, and as a government, we've taken seriously the reductions, moving towards the elimination, by 2014, of coal. Do they believe in carbon capture and storage? That sounds rather expensive to me. They're going to take those smoke stacks and shove them into the ground? Where is their cost foundation for this?

We're moving forward with the Green Energy Act. It's an ambitious and bold opportunity to transition the economy here in the province of Ontario. But we look forward to the opportunities to get more input from the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The recent budget makes it very clear that there are two fundamentally different approaches to job creation in this House. On buy-Ontario, this government refuses to set a specific level of Ontario content in green energy projects. The NDP says that we need a 60% Ontario content in all green energy projects, as they do in Quebec. Wind turbines and the steel frames that support them must be made here in Ontario. The NDP has a buy-Ontario program with teeth. Why doesn't this government have one?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. We've had a number of opportunities to speak to this in the House and I'm sure we will have more. It's only natural, especially in times of great economic challenge, that we want to do everything we can to support our domestic and our provincial economy. I understand that.

When it comes to monies that we're investing in public transit in the province of Ontario, 82% of those dollars will be invested right here in the province of Ontario, and we are proud of that.

With respect to our new Green Energy Act, we've made provision within the legislation itself to put in place a specific figure, and I would appreciate any advice that the honourable member may offer in that regard.

I'm also advising Ontarians on an individual basis, for example, when we go out there and shop for food, to give preference to Ontario foods. Those are the kinds of things that we need to do on a day-to-day basis. At the same time, we don't want to go so far down that protectionist path that we're saying that we wouldn't want Americans to buy the 85% of the cars that we produce up here for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government likes to talk about the fact that the transit construction work is Ontario-sourced. How could it not be Ontario-sourced? It's construction work. Nobody is fooled by your talk of 82% domestic content.

The bottom line is this: This government says 25% domestic content is good enough in purchasing transit vehicles; the NDP says we need an aggressive buy-Ontario transit program with 50% Ontario content. Why is this government stubbornly sticking to a watered-down Ontario-content requirement that is going to cost us jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my colleague speaks of 25% and 50%; we're at 82%. We're seeing that 82% of all the monies that are going to be invested in public transit will be spent right here in the province of Ontario to support our economy, our workers and their families. We think that's pretty strong and pretty bold.

Again, with respect to our Green Energy Act, we're now going to consider options as to what we might do there to ensure that we are doing everything we possibly can to have those dollars spent inside the province of Ontario.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague, if there are specific recommendations she has in that regard, we would welcome those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government also likes to trumpet something that they're calling Ontario Buys, but Ontario Buys has got nothing to do with ensuring that the multibillion-dollar purchasing budget of this government is targeted to creating good-paying jobs right here in Ontario. The NDP would have a specific domestic content requirement for all purchases made by government, hospitals, universities and schools. There's an idea for you. Why has this government failed to implement a real buy-Ontario program in the midst of the worst job crisis since the Depression?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I may have something that speaks to that specifically: 95% of our almost 45,000 government suppliers are located in Ontario, so we are doing everything that we can. I think that's a pretty impressive figure, but we think there is more that we might do. While my colleague might belittle, for the time, our efforts made through Ontario Buys, we think that we can, as a government, go further than any government has ever gone before without running the risk of being honestly labelled as protectionist.

The other side of this—I understand where my colleague is coming from—of course, is that we are a powerful exporter of goods, and should the rest of the world decide to stop buying Ontario goods, we'll be in serious trouble. So we're going to continue to walk that line—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With each passing day, it becomes very clear that the budget tabled last month is anti-jobs and anti-growth. Each month, thousands of Ontarians are being thrown out of work in the construction sector in this province, yet the government imposes a tax of 8% on the soft costs associated with new housing construction and renovation. Both the industry and the construction trades warned this government against such a move. How could the government impose an 8% tax on the construction industry when thousands and thousands of Ontario construction workers are losing their jobs each and every month?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: An important part of the budget is the \$32.5 billion we're going to invest in infrastructure, in schools, roads, bridges, hospitals, public transit and the like. On top of that, there's our Green Energy Act, which is designed to stimulate construction of new renewable sources of electricity, everywhere from remote parts of northern Ontario to farms in the south-west. We think that we're going to do a lot of good when it comes to creating new construction opportunities for workers right across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here are the real facts: In the GTA alone, the housing industry generates 360,000 jobs and hundreds of thousands more of spinoff jobs, but de-

mand has fallen dramatically in the past year. Now, many homes are going to be subject to at least a \$30,000 tax increase, further reducing demand. Will this government admit that when it comes to the housing industry, its HST is a job killer, pure and simple?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that it's important to understand what we're doing here. We did listen to the housing industry, and we did, of course, want to take into account new costs when it comes to our home buyers. We've provided an exemption for homes at \$400,000 and less. I think the federal exemption only goes up to \$350,000; we've exceeded that by another \$50,000. Furthermore, the full effect of the new single sales tax doesn't take effect until you buy a home that's \$500,000 or more.

If you look at all the homes sold annually in Ontario, the overwhelming majority are resale homes—used homes, so to speak. Then there are brand new homes; the overwhelming majority of those are valued at less than \$500,000. In fact, they're at less than \$400,000. We're talking about a small proportion of homes that are sold on an annual basis that are over \$500,000. Our concern was for folks who are buying homes at less than \$500,000.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here are the facts on the HST: Ordinary families are going to be forced to pay 8% more for gas at the pumps, 8% more for home heating. A struggling GTA housing industry is going to be slammed by a marginal tax rate of 32% on homes priced between \$400,000 and \$500,000. This is going to cost Ontario tens of thousands of construction jobs and, as a result, reduce demand on other goods and services. When will this government admit that the HST is bad for the GTA housing industry, it's bad for the economy and it's bad for Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One hundred and thirty other countries have already done this; they've put in place a single sales tax or a value-added tax. Four other provinces have also done this as well.

We are confident that we can do this and do it in a way that protects our families: 93% of Ontarians will get a personal income tax cut under our approach. We're putting in place, as well, a new Ontario sales tax credit. This is permanent as well: \$260 each for adults and children. We're also going to reduce the level of taxation at the lowest tax level, the lowest income level, so that Ontario's low-income families will pay the lowest level of income taxes in the country. We've tried to be thoughtful, balanced and progressive in doing things that both stimulate growth in the economy and protect families at the same time.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Premier, as you know, the Smart Systems for

Health Agency spent \$647 million of taxpayer money, with very little to show for it, before you quietly disbanded it last September. Unlike Quebec, Alberta and BC, which are going to have their e-health systems operating by 2010, Ontario will not have a system until 2015. Premier, the Deloitte report of 2007 was critical of the agency. In response to that report the CEO, Michael Lauber, explained that there was an unclear road map that had been given to it by your government.

I ask you today, although your own health minister refuses to be accountable to taxpayers, will you call in the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit of the agency?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: In the member's question there were several items which were factually incorrect. First of all, the road map that the member refers to is the mandate provided by the previous Progressive Conservative government when they set up Smart Systems for Health.

In fact, Smart Systems for Health helped to lay the infrastructure upon which we are building a better and more efficient electronic health strategy for the province. Among its successes, Ontario spent a lot of time and energy building the wait-time information system, for example, to make sure that all Ontarians have access to timely surgical procedures. That is now connected to every surgeon's office in the province of Ontario. I would say that no other province in Canada has this in place.

Moving forward, unlike what the member said in her question, eHealth Ontario is aiming to give every patient living with diabetes in Ontario an electronic health record by 2012. The agency is also tracking the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The response of the minister is a little bit of a joke. He was in charge from 2003 to 2007. It's unfortunate that he didn't give a road map to the agency. We know there was a problem because they quietly disbanded it. I say to you, Minister, that there is even more reason for a value-for-money audit by the Auditor General today, given what Deloitte and Touche said, given the fact that none of the information that you said was in public accounts is there, and given the fact that now, in the first three months of the new eHealth agency, we're already finding that spending is more than \$200,000 for food, accommodation and catering. And we're now hearing that consultants are flying back and forth to Edmonton and you're paying for it.

Hon. David Caplan: The member is, once again, factually incorrect. In fact, yesterday she issued a news release claiming that the government had spent—

Mr. John Yakabuski: No wonder they don't have a road map; they're always flying.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew, you've been interrupting on numerous occasions. I'd just ask you to be respectful.

Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the member doesn't point out that the Conservative caucus itself spent

\$667,000 on travel, food and accommodation in the year 2007. I think that an agency which has a mandate to have electronic health infrastructure in the province of Ontario is far wiser spending than two thirds of a million dollars by the Conservative caucus on food, travel and accommodation.

But it's even worse: In the member's press release yesterday, she said that the McGuinty government has spent \$647 million on the Smart Systems for Health Agency. In fact, it was under a previous Conservative government that \$150 million of that was spent. Why is this member trying to hide her party's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that he just made.

Hon. David Caplan: I'll withdraw, Speaker, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Thousands of auto parts workers across the province have lost their jobs, and tens of thousands of others fear every day that they will be laid off. The government has finally stepped up to the plate and provided some assistance to auto manufacturers. However, why is the government refusing to provide similar financial support for the auto parts plants that are equally at risk and that contribute billions of dollars to the Ontario economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Firstly, as the member is aware, assisting the auto manufacturers obviously assists the entire supply chain. As a result of that, the parts suppliers—and you're absolutely right, I say to the member. They're an incredibly important part, not only of our auto industry, but our provincial economy. But assisting the manufacturers assists those suppliers as well.

The United States established a program that, in essence, does what Canada already does for the auto parts suppliers, and ends up doing it more expensively than we have in Canada. So in fact, the financial assistance provided by the US for, in essence, receivables insurance already exists in Canada. We will continue to work with the parts industry to continue to make it a global leader around the world.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, blind faith is not enough to keep the auto parts plants in business. It's not good enough just to hope that the automakers will use their government support funds to pay their suppliers when this is not a condition of the support. It's not good enough to say that the support from Export Development Canada against defaulting on payments will keep auto parts plants alive. Many of Ontario's 600 auto part plants are at risk of shutting down unless the McGuinty government comes through with direct emergency financing of these plants.

Once again, why won't the Premier step forward and ensure that the survival of these plants and the jobs of thousands of Ontario workers are not at risk?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Again, the calls for assistance for the parts industry arose, in part, because the United States treasury announced a \$5-billion aid package for the auto parts manufacturers. Under the program, it protects supplier receivables in the event that GM and Chrysler suppliers go under, in exchange for a fee of about 2% to 3%. In Canada, that system, that program, already exists. Last year, the charge was 0.75%, and it ends up covering 90% of the value of the shipment and is used pretty widely. Requests obviously continue to go, and last year, my understanding is the crown corporation provided \$3.2 billion in such funding to the industry alone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer.

Hon. Michael Bryant: We have the program in place. The fee is less than it is in the United States, and I'm confident that that program will continue to have that kind of success.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Yesterday, together with the Premier, you hosted the fifth annual Premier's summit on agri-food. I'm proud to say a number of the participants are from my riding in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

For the past five years, the Premier's summit has provided a forum for farmers from across Ontario to engage with our Premier and our minister to discuss both the challenges faced and the opportunities that exist in agriculture and the agri-food sector. As a government, we have always invited the input of our farmers, and, as a result, we continue to provide support with over \$1.2 billion in farm income support programs. We are encouraging innovation in the sector through the Premier's award for agri-food innovation, which is presented to the award recipients at this annual summit.

Could the minister provide this House and Ontario's farmers with more information about the Premier's award for agri-food innovation?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very appreciative of the question from the honourable member. We did have an excellent summit yesterday. Certainly our agriculture partners very much appreciate that our Premier is the first Premier in the province of Ontario to annually gather agriculture leaders to provide us with some advice.

After the summit in 2004, by the way, the Premier was so impressed with the innovation that was reported at that summit that our government created the Premier's award for agri-food innovation. It's a \$2.5-million program that's awarded to outstanding farm innovators. This year, the deadline for applications was December. We had more than 180 farmers participate in the program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: As a result, there were awards made yesterday: the Premier's award and the minister's award, and there will be 55 regional awards—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The minister and the ministry staff worked hard and were very dedicated to hosting these summits, along with the Premier, and that is very much appreciated by farmers. My farm constituents have told me how much they appreciate our recognition of their important contribution to our provincial economy and the opportunity for their representatives to speak directly with the Premier and the minister.

The Premier's summit puts the spotlight on agriculture in Ontario and allows our government to foster innovation, which is a critical area for partnering with this industry. The fifth annual Premier's summit on agri-food demonstrates our continued commitment to Ontario's agriculture and food sector. Ontario's agri-food industry generates more than \$33 billion annually to our economy and employs approximately 700,000 people. I can't say enough about how important this sector is to the economy of this province and to our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The summit is a tremendous opportunity to showcase the innovation that's taking place on the concession roads right across rural Ontario.

I'd like to just offer two examples that were recognized yesterday. The first one was for the Premier's award. Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Co. from Picton received \$100,000. Now, this is the innovation that's happening at that business. They are Canada's only platinum LEED dairy. They're a cheese manufacturer, and they use sheep and goat cheese. This is a state-of-the-art facility. They use solar, wind and geothermal technologies. The dairy sustainability theme is carried through the entire enterprise with environmentally friendly waste processing, as well as green cleaning agents.

The minister's award winners were Hillside Gardens Ltd. from Bradford—this innovation showcased traceability—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many families in my riding do not have a family doctor. One family of four was told by their retiring doctor that their patient files would be sent to a record storage and retrieval service and they would be charged a small courier fee to retrieve their records.

Minister, this family contacted the service, and they were told it would cost them \$339 each for the family of four for their medical records. Do you feel it's reasonable to charge this family over \$1,200 to retrieve a copy of their medical records?

Hon. David Caplan: It's difficult for me to comment on the case. I'd be very happy if the member would want

to forward to me the correspondence or any records that have been provided.

The member started her question talking about there being many without family physicians. I can tell the member that we're doing much to reverse the years of inaction, to boost access to doctors and to family health care in Ontario. I can tell you that we've turned a corner and that we now have more doctors per capita after a decade of decline. There are 1,794 more doctors in Ontario today than there were in 2003. In fact, this past year the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario registered a record number of physicians in the province of Ontario.

I would be very happy to review the case that the member has brought forward. I would be very interested in seeing the details and I would be happy to follow up with the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, I'm happy to forward you the e-mail for this one particular family, but the reality is that this is a retiring physician who is practising in my community and hundreds of families are affected, not one.

People without a family doctor are subjected to being treated like second-class citizens by your government. This family does not have a family doctor or access to all the services they would have if they were part of a family health network. Are you going to force this family to pay over \$1,200 to get access to their medical records, especially at a time when they don't even have a family physician?

Hon. David Caplan: I think the member wrote her supplementary without listening to the answer to the question. I said I would be very happy to review the matter. The member is clearly not interested in a reply.

The facts of the matters are these: These fees, as such, are regulated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. I would be happy to review the matter, but the facts of the matter are clear: When the member's party was on this side of the House, they did nothing to increase the supply of doctors in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, it took the action of this government to reverse that trend. We've increased medical school spaces, we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member—you asked the question. I would just encourage you to please listen to the response. Ten seconds.

Hon. David Caplan: The member is not interested in a response; rather, a platform and grandstanding. Our government has taken action to increase the supply of doctors. In fact, 2008 was a banner year for the registration of physicians in the province of Ontario, something that all members of this House should celebrate.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I stood alongside my steelworker brothers and sisters to support the remaining 600 National Steel Car

workers who are on strike, trying to keep their jobs from going to Alabama. These workers have already been hit hard by reduced hours, and now they're being asked to take a 25% cut in wages and benefits. I offered to meet with the National Steel Car's CEO to find out how we can get back on track, for example, with the Canadian Wheat Board to keep hundreds working and supporting the local economy.

Will the Premier contact National Steel Car chair and CEO Greg Aziz to work out a plan to keep this company operating in Hamilton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member knows that this province has one of the best labour relations records in the entire world. We're confident that the parties will work together. We know that when the different interested parties meet at the bargaining table to resolve their differences, they can get an agreement done. We have always felt that that is the best place to resolve differences. That's why 97% of all collective agreements are done without work stoppage. That's because we have employers and trade unions and employees and all stakeholders rolling up their sleeves, working together to keep our province moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I cannot believe that answer.

National Steel Car is the largest single-site rail car plant in North America, an ISO 9001 company whose rich Canadian history includes building rail cars, passenger trains and planes, the Avro. The workers at National Steel Car and US Steel-Stelco need a plan from this government to keep the steel industry going to create ripple-effect jobs across Hamilton industries. For example, the Premier could contact the federal minister responsible for the wheat board to encourage him to buy Ontario-made rail cars and not lease them through an American company.

When will the Premier meet with National Steel Car to find creative solutions and to work out strong, competitive incentives to keep National Steel Car in Hamilton and from going to Alabama?

1110

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I say to the member is that we continue to work with all parties to ensure that a collective agreement can get done. And we do this—

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I don't think the member wants to listen. But what we do—

Mr. Paul Miller: You're not answering the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to please listen to the response. Thank you.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I know that the employer and the trade union are doing everything they can to come to a collective agreement. I know that because our Ministry of Labour mediators and conciliators are there assisting. They are the best in the country. They are called upon to be at the table to help the parties resolve those differences so that they can get on with working and moving

forward. That's why we have the best labour relations that this province has had in over 30 years.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As our province moves forward in building a knowledge-based economy, we know that investing in skills and education is a priority. Attracting more people to post-secondary education and training will ensure that Ontario's workforce remains on the competitive edge in the global economy. In my own community, St. Clair College and the University of Windsor are doing tremendous work in promoting their programs and encouraging more students from all over Canada, and around the world, to seek education there. We know that post-secondary education will be essential in the new economy. With more students on our campuses, we are seeing additional strain on our facilities, classrooms and labs. Minister, what have you done to ensure our post-secondary education institutions are able to withstand the influx of students?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question and he certainly raises a very important point of the value of the bricks and mortar side of post-secondary education. I've been very proud that this government, particularly in this mandate, has put a real emphasis on infrastructure at our colleges and universities, both through the 2007 fall economic statement and the 2008 budget. Through both those budgets, we invested \$190 million at 12 different colleges across the province to increase space and address equipment shortages, creating 13,000 new spaces for students, 4,500 of which are apprenticeship students. On the university side, those two economic statements invested \$264 million for capital projects, linking education to economic growth and competitiveness, and we've invested \$400 million in campus renewal.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I know that St. Clair College and the University of Windsor were pleased to receive over \$15 million in deferred maintenance and equipment renewal investments last year. This money is helping them to expand classrooms and ensure students are learning on up-to-date equipment that prepares them for today's modern workplace. With the recent economic downturn, it is essential that we do everything we can to create jobs in the short term while improving Ontario's competitiveness in the long term. Investing in post-secondary infrastructure does just that. Recently our government announced that we will be investing \$32.5 billion in infrastructure projects over the next two years. Minister, how do you plan on moving ahead with a long-term infrastructure plan for our campuses?

Hon. John Milloy: I was very pleased that the most recent budget of several weeks ago complemented what had come forward in the fall economic statement and the budget of a year ago, and that was a commitment of \$780 million for our province's colleges and universities. Of course, we are working very closely with the federal

government and want to see this funding complement a similar program that came forward from them.

At the same time, the budget also contained an additional \$35 million for new medical school infrastructure. This capital investment will support the creation of 100 new medical school spaces across the province of Ontario and add to our government's priority of increasing the supply of doctors.

We are working very closely with Ontario's colleges and universities and the federal government to make sure that this funding gets out the door as quickly as possible and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Premier, buying a home is the single largest investment that many of us will make in our entire lifetime. Governments should do what they can to support that important Canadian value of home ownership, but this Premier is throwing one roadblock after another in front of middle-class families trying to buy a new home. The Premier knows that almost 40% of all new housing in the greater Toronto area is priced at more than \$400,000. If a family were to choose Toronto, they'd face the new McGuinty-Miller land transfer tax and now a brand new 8% sales tax.

Premier, why are you taxing homes out of reach of middle-class families in the GTA?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government has put together a tax cut package for average Ontarians that's unprecedented in the history of Ontario: \$10.6 billion. We'll have the lowest tax rate on the first bracket. We've also provided the most generous sales tax credit in the country compared to all the other harmonized provinces.

This package is the right package of corporate tax cuts, business tax cuts, that will stimulate this economy and get us to better and stronger growth so that we can continue to maintain and enhance our vital public services—education, health care—and a better environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: That has got to be some massive rebate if it's going to beat the \$32,000 tax hike you're going to impose on middle-class families buying a home in the GTA.

This also impacts on resale homes. The Ontario Real Estate Association estimates that the Dalton McGuinty sales tax will add \$2,300 to the cost of a real estate transaction. From legal fees, moving costs, commissions and home inspection fees, the McGuinty-Miller land transfer tax in Toronto is up to \$3,500 more per home and has already resulted in a 23% drop in sales, let alone the impacts of your so-called Green Energy Act on the cost of home heating.

Premier, given that we want to get out of this recession, private sector job creation will be key. Why are you

trying to strangle the construction and home building industry?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite: I just said a moment ago that we have a very generous sales tax that will effectively exempt 75% of new homes in Ontario. Actually, new home sales went up 16% in Nova Scotia and 12% in New Brunswick after the implementation of the single sales tax in those provinces.

I heard Mr. Hudak say on TVO's *The Agenda* that he doesn't think our \$32.5-billion infrastructure—he says, “I don't think that's the right approach.” Christine Elliott said that she read about Tim's position on that and personally believes that we should keep it. Who speaks for that party over there? Are they for a harmonized sales tax? Are they for an infrastructure plan? Who stands and speaks for that party? I can tell you this: This government speaks—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. We've been doing very well.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. The Premier talks regularly about building a caring Ontario, one that provides the tools for all Ontarians to participate and contribute. Last year, the Minister of Children and Youth Services shut low-income people out of the closed-door hearings on the government poverty plan, and then the government never reported back on what they heard from Ontarians who are losing their jobs and falling into poverty. Now the government is restricting its hearings on the poverty reduction plan to just two half-days in Toronto; again, denying the opportunity for poor Ontarians outside of Toronto to speak about the struggles that they are facing.

1120

If the Premier really cares about Ontarians, why won't the government hold broad-based public hearings across Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't speak to the specifics of any committee decisions with respect to what kind of travel they're going to do, but I can say that Ontarians who have paid some attention to our government and the approach we've brought to dealing with issues of poverty affecting too many Ontario families I think will come to the conclusion that our heart's in the right place.

Take a look at this most recent budget. We are just about doubling the Ontario child benefit. We brought forward a commitment that we were to deliver on in 2011 to 2009, from \$50 a month to \$92 a month. We're putting \$1.2 billion into retrofitting social housing and building more affordable housing. We're going to ensure that our low-income earners pay the lowest level of income taxation in the country. So I think it is unfair to accuse us of not understanding and not reaching out to Ontario families who are affected by poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: If the Premier really wanted to build a caring and thriving Ontario, his government would strengthen the Poverty Reduction Act. They would put in place a citizen advisory committee to monitor the poverty reduction strategy, as they have done in Quebec. They would require all ministers to consider and report on poverty impacts of new legislation, as they've done in Quebec. They would put an ambitious long-term goal for poverty reduction in the act, as they did in Quebec. And they would require poverty reduction strategies to include a full range of strategies, as in Quebec.

Is the McGuinty government restricting public hearings to two half-days in Toronto because they know that people living in poverty will compare other jurisdictions and say that this bill is simply not good enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Listen, I understand that it's never good enough, not only as a constant refrain coming from my colleagues, but in many ways, I personally believe that whatever we have done, there is still always more left undone. And we're going to try to find ways to build on that. But I think, in fairness, it is worthy to stop and consider that we are the first government of any political stripe to put in place a poverty reduction strategy, with some targets, with some specific strategies and with some accompanying legislation. We think that is a good foundation on which to build.

I'm always open to more suggestions from my colleagues opposite, but at some point in time we're going to stop the presses, because somebody over there is going to get up and say, “Moving forward in the way that you have is a good start.”

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week was a big week for transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton. I understand that it was always the intent of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006, to merge Metrolinx and GO Transit. If the proposed legislation passes, it will mean great things for transportation across the region.

Metrolinx's regional transportation plan has a number of initiatives to improve public transit, and I've heard from many in my riding who would like to see these initiatives implemented, and implemented quickly. There are also those from Hamilton who use GO Transit regularly. I have heard from these constituents that they would like to know more about the effect that this potential merger may have on future public transit plans. Can the minister tell us exactly what the merger of GO Transit and Metrolinx will mean for the people of Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the member's interest in public transit. Recently, we announced that this government plans to merge Metrolinx and GO Transit. We believe that, if passed, this legislation would create a single transit agency able to move quickly to

take The Big Move, Metrolinx's regional transportation plan, off the drawing board and actually into service. It will bring the considerable expertise of both agencies together under one roof and allow us to get shovels in the ground quickly on key projects. The proposed new agency will deliver better customer service, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create almost 430,000 Ontario jobs.

I want to assure the member that GO Transit will continue to remain visible in terms of an operating brand and transit service. There will be no service disruption. We will continue to work with municipal governments to knit together a regional transportation network that will serve all their constituents even more effectively.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Minister, I'm pleased to hear that, if passed, the legislation will maintain GO service and that we will see projects move forward at a quickened pace.

Many Hamiltonians took great interest in the final regional transportation plan, as congestion is an issue I hear about quite often from my constituents. Many of those living in Hamilton commute to Oakville, Mississauga and even Toronto.

As part of last week's announcement, we saw funding for five major projects across the GTA and Hamilton. As well, we saw new funding for a variety of GO projects from Niagara to Bowmanville. I'm hoping that this is only the beginning. Could the Minister of Transportation please share with this House what the proposed merger will mean for public transit, especially for those living in Hamilton?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Hamilton plays an integral role in this government's vision of a seamless regional transit network for the five million people living in the GTA and Hamilton. The top 15 transit priorities in Metrolinx's regional transportation plan include projects for Hamilton, such as express rail on the Lakeshore line from Hamilton to Oshawa and rapid transit in downtown Hamilton from McMaster University to Eastgate mall.

Last Wednesday, we saw the province invest \$3 million in a study that will support Hamilton's evaluation of its rapid transit corridors. This funding is essential for planning, design and environmental assessment work to help bring rapid transit to Hamilton on the two proposed corridors. The proposed merger of Metrolinx and GO Transit will allow projects such as these to move faster, getting more people out of their cars and onto public transit. We have a very ambitious plan and we are in the process—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

SMOKING CESSATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion and it's related to products designed to promote health, but I feel compelled to ask the minister for a commitment first. Since past behaviour is often the best indicator of future behaviour, I feel that I

should ask the minister if she will commit to answering a question that pertains to her portfolio without deflecting to one of her colleagues. Simply put, will the minister answer a question that I put about health promotion? If I do that, will you answer it?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member for his comments and I would like the member to know that whenever he thinks about a question and asks me a question that pertains to my ministry, I will be very pleased to answer it.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I, too, applaud the answer.

Prior to the last provincial election, your predecessor announced that as of August 2007, the government would be eliminating the RST on nicotine replacement therapies, including the patch, sprays, inhalers and more. Your government even included this announcement in the election platform, claiming that they would help even more Ontarians quit smoking by removing the provincial sales tax from nicotine patches and making those and other therapies more widely available. Now your government is breaking that promise and hiking taxes on those very same products.

Are you no longer interested in helping Ontarians quit smoking, do you no longer think that nicotine replacement therapies are effective, and if you do, why have you been so silent? Why have you not defended Ontarians from your government's attacks on their health?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government is certainly committed to helping Ontarians break the cycle of tobacco addiction. In 2007-08, we provided close to \$15 million for cessation programs, services, training and public education. So far in 2008-09, we have allocated \$9.7 million to support cessation products. Whether it is public education, tobacco control legislation or support of people who want to quit, we have been proactive. And 93% of Ontario's taxpayers will pay less personal income taxes because of our budget. This is very important because it means that Ontario families will have more money in their pockets to spend. Families with an income of less than \$160,000 will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1130

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Minister of Colleges, Training and Universities: The largest arts and science faculty in Ontario voted yesterday in favour of a flat fee. This fee is equivalent to a five-course load even if students only take three or four courses. Does the minister agree with this flat fee as a way of compensating for the fact that Ontario universities are dead last in Canada in per capita student funding?

Hon. John Milloy: I had a chance to comment on this yesterday. The honourable member is aware that we have a regulated tuition framework in the province of Ontario. Under that regulated tuition fee framework, universities

may charge students tuition fees on a program or flat-fee basis. He may be aware that the University of Toronto already has a number of programs that are charged on a flat-fee basis, as do 10 other universities across the province. It's my understanding that Carleton University, my alma mater, has had that in place for 25 years.

The question is about the tuition fee framework. Is the policy brought forward by any university consistent with the tuition fee framework, which not only limits the amount of tuition increase that can affect a student; it also mandates universities to make sure that they provide any additional financial help? Because our number one goal is to make sure that no student is ever denied access to university—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Perhaps GO should charge transit riders a flat fee for a 100-kilometre trip no matter how far they're really going, or LCBO customers who buy three or four bottles could be charged for five. It is simply ridiculous to charge students who are already reeling from an enormous debt load and some of the highest tuitions in the province for courses that they're not taking. Does the minister approve of the flat fee that U of T is proposing?

Hon. John Milloy: The program of flat fees has been in place for decades. At Carleton University, it has been in place for 25 years. The issue is ensuring that students do not face financial obstacles when they wish to go to colleges or universities. I'm very proud to be part of a government which has brought in a tuition fee framework which has doubled the amount of student aid, which has worked very hard to make sure that students have the support they need. I find it passing strange for a member who was part of a government which saw tuition fees skyrocket, which cut upfront grants, to stand up and have the gall to talk about not supporting students.

DEFERRED VOTES

2009 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the budget motion.

On March 30, 2009, Mr. Runciman moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 26, 2009, "that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "that this House" and adding the following:

"acknowledges that budget 2009 brings in the biggest deficit in Ontario's history of \$14 billion, when the McGuinty Liberals had a \$6-billion surplus just last year; and

"acknowledges that under this government's watch, nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared, with another 135,000 expected to be lost this year; and

"acknowledges that the Premier broke his promise not to raise taxes after the 2003 election by imposing a health tax of up to \$900; and

"acknowledges that the Premier again broke his promise with this budget by announcing his scheme to create a single sales tax, the biggest tax grab in Ontario's history, that will force people to pay taxes on everything from a cup of coffee to funeral services; and

"acknowledges that serial promise-breaking on tax increases, coupled with serial spending and mismanagement of public money, will not be tolerated by the people of Ontario.

"Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House."

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Members please take their seats.

All those in favour of Mr. Runciman's amendment will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	Yakubski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Qadri, Shafiq
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable members to stay in their seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 60.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment to the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr. Duncan. On March 26, 2009, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr.

McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Same vote reversed? Agreed? Agreed. The reverse: the ayes will be 60; the nays will be 26. I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Ted Arnott: For almost a year I have been urging the provincial government to extend GO Transit rail service through Acton, Rockwood, Guelph and Kitchener–Waterloo.

On July 17 of last year, I wrote to federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty to request financial assistance from the federal government for this project. In the fall, I organized a meeting at Queen's Park with officials from GO Transit and the town of Halton Hills. More than once I've stood in this Legislature to call for progressive action on this file.

In December, I introduced a private member's resolution calling on the McGuinty government to complete the environmental assessment and get the trains carrying passengers to work no later than September 2011. Of course I've often discussed the merits of this project with the Minister of Transportation, and did as late as last week.

It is encouraging that the federal and provincial governments are promising to fund capacity and bridge improvements to the Georgetown line. I want to thank my federal counterpart, the Honourable Michael Chong, for his work on this issue. I also want to continue to urge the Honourable Jim Bradley to do what he can as Ontario's Minister of Transportation.

We need to speed up infrastructure projects that will enhance our long-term competitiveness, our environment and our quality of life. Friday's announcement was a good step forward, and I intend to continue pushing the government to keep this train on track.

WORLD WATER DAY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I rise today to recognize a gift of nature that we rarely take time to contemplate. March

22 was World Water Day, an international day of observance and action to draw attention to the plight of the more than one billion people worldwide who lack access to clean, safe drinking water.

Here in Ontario, home of the five Great Lakes, we are fortunate to have an abundance of fresh water. But despite this abundance, our history shows that water security is of universal importance. Few of us will ever forget the terrible tragedy that befell the people of Walkerton in 2000, when seven people died and more than 2,300 people fell ill from drinking contaminated water. The physical, psychological and economic impact of the water crisis on the community cannot be overstated. I am proud to be part of a government that has taken strong action to prevent a repeat of this horrible tragedy.

In my riding of Huron–Bruce, construction of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre's permanent home began last autumn. The centre was established in response to the recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry, and it focuses on training for drinking water professionals across Ontario. In particular, small and remote communities, including First Nations, benefit from this centre.

This is just one of the many steps we have taken to ensure safe drinking water. I invite the House to join me in recognizing this important natural resource.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Today I would like to share with the Legislature the wonderful work that local college students in my riding have been doing for the community.

On April 2, two second-year students from Georgian College's early childhood education program stopped by my office and asked me if I would bring their work and message on childhood poverty to Queen's Park.

Sarah McCallum and Anya Pucan, representing their 15 classmates, presented me with over 3,500 handprints that had been created by local children in the riding. The handprints were part of a second-year ECE students' ethics and advocacy class project.

The class as a whole decided to focus on children living in poverty in Canada. The students told me that the ECE professionals are usually the first educators to deal with children in poverty, and it was important for them to understand how and why poverty occurs in this country. McCallum and Pucan shared with me their research findings that one in six children in Canada lives in poverty, and an average low-income, single-parent family lives on approximately \$9,500 below the poverty line.

Also, the students told me that between 2001 and 2006, there had been a 2.3% climb in the number of children living in poverty.

The students gathered over 35 handprints, each print representing 100 children living in poverty in the province of Ontario.

The ECE students gathered the handprints from local day cares and elementary schools in the area. Upon collecting the handprints, the ECE students displayed them at the Georgian College campus in Owen Sound.

The students asked me if I would deliver the hand-prints to the Premier and ask him and his government to keep their commitment of a 25 in 5 poverty reduction strategy.

OSWALDO RAMIREZ

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to congratulate Dr. Oswaldo Ramirez on being named the postgraduate family medicine preceptor of the year by the rural Ontario medical program.

ROMP began as the seed of an idea over two decades ago, providing medical trainees across south-central Ontario with hands-on experience outside the academic arena and in a rural rotation. The medical residents work one on one with a medical preceptor or mentor to learn the clinical, professional, social and academic components involved in practising medicine, receiving intense training that they might not otherwise receive in an urban setting. ROMP works to provide rural Ontario with home-grown physicians to ease the province's ever-increasing doctor shortage.

Its success is largely contributed to by the hard work of physicians like Dr. Ramirez, who has not only demonstrated great skill in medicine but an incredible ability to teach as well.

Dr. Ramirez's award is based on student evaluations that acknowledged his overwhelming efforts to go above and beyond the call of duty for his students and residents. He even made such an impact on one of his students that he was able to convince one former student, Brenda Prebble, to join the Alliston family health team.

This is truly a fitting recognition of Dr. Ramirez's service to his students and the people of New Tecumseth, Adjala-Tosorontio and Essa in general. I join with the residents of our area, his colleagues and Dr. Peter Wells of ROMP in congratulating Dr. Ramirez on this tremendous success and on this well-deserved award.

PATRICIA MOORE

Mr. Michael Prue: Every year on March 24, the people of East York gather together to commemorate the birth of a remarkable woman, Agnes Macphail. For the last 16 years, we have been handing out an award to a citizen of our community who exemplifies Agnes Macphail's commitment to the people of this province and of this country. We award a citizen who continues with Agnes Macphail's legacy in women's rights, seniors, access to housing or any other good social advocacy.

This year's winner is Patricia Moore. To quote the nominator of Patricia Moore because I think she said it better even than I could, "Pat is a tireless worker, effective community advocate, and relentless pursuer of social justice. Whether it is tenants being taken advantage of, youth who feel misunderstood or who have lost their way, or citizens who have been victimized, you can always count on Pat to step in and take action. She most definitely is not afraid to speak up!" That quotation is from Satinder Sahota.

Pat has done an amazing job. She is a tenant advocate. She works with youth to help them find jobs and opportunities. She volunteers at 53 division of the police on community liaison. She is an advocate and keen worker for UMOVE, United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere. And she reaches out to those not only in her own community, not only in East York, but across the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario to help those who are most in need. Congratulations, Pat.

BANGLADESH

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today in this House to recognize the 38th independence anniversary of Bangladesh. Recently, I had the honour to speak at a function held near my riding of Scarborough Southwest and organized by members of the Bangladeshi community to celebrate the Independence Day of Bangladesh. Over 200 members from a cross-section of the Bangladeshi community of Toronto were in attendance.

In 1971, Bangladesh became an independent nation following a nine-month war of liberation. An estimated three million people lost their lives in this liberation war. The Awami League under the leadership of the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the then East Pakistan won a majority in the election. Although he was not allowed to form the government, his election served as the catalyst for the Bengali people's right to self-determination.

Sheikh Rahman led the movement and declared the independence of Bangladesh. This event is especially significant because it led to the first-ever benefit concert, an event held in New York City by former Beatle George Harrison and Ravi Shankar on August 1, 1971, playing to a total of 40,000 people at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Organized for relief of refugees of East Pakistan, now known as Bangladesh, the event was the first benefit concert and it featured performers such as Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Billy Preston, Leon Russell and Ringo Starr. The concert raised over \$243,000 for Bangladesh relief and it was administered by UNICEF.

On behalf of this assembly, I extend congratulations to the Bangladeshi community on celebrating the 38th anniversary of their independence.

1510

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The township of Mulmer in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon has passed an excellent resolution which I think is very important for all members of the Legislature to hear:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has released Bill 150, the proposed Green Energy Act ... for comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights; and

"Mulmer has spent substantial time, effort and money over the past two years to develop comprehensive policies to deal with alternative energy projects; and

"The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was poised to approve much of the township's new policy

until an appeal of the amendment was launched by a wind farm developer;

"The wind farm being proposed is for the Honeywood area within the township and may not be appropriate for the site and area in which it is being proposed to be located, given the number of serious and as-yet-unresolved concerns identified during the environmental screening process;

"Since transition regulations have not been released and it is not yet known whether this project will be subject to the proposed new provincial regulations or current processes or requirements;

"There is no indication that the province intends to consult specifically with the host municipality or its directly affected ratepayers in a manner similar to that now conducted by a municipality under the Planning Act, a process which is considered essential to sound land use planning;

"There is no indication that the substantial costs to municipalities in reviewing and commenting on such proposals can be recovered in the same way that they are now recoverable under the Planning Act;

"The township believes that the Niagara Escarpment area is not an appropriate location for large-scale energy conversion projects of any kind and that, at a minimum, a one-kilometre buffer around the boundaries of the Niagara Escarpment plan is appropriate;

"Both the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, up until now, have been in full agreement with the exclusion and buffer area"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I thank the honourable armchair Speakers as well, too. Perhaps your co-operation will be there during question period.

LE CENTRE DE SERVICES À LA FAMILLE

M. Phil McNeely: Le Centre de services à la famille est un organisme sans but lucratif établi au cœur d'Ottawa qui travaille dans le comté d'Ottawa-Vanier depuis 15 ans. Je suis heureux de vous faire connaître le Centre de services à la famille. Le but de cette déclaration est de promouvoir le 15^e anniversaire du centre. Son engagement auprès des familles a de fortes visées d'ordre préventif telles que le décrochage scolaire chez les jeunes et la détresse chez les parents. La prévention est menée grâce à des activités d'éducation et d'accompagnement.

La brève description suivante donne un aperçu de la mission que le centre s'efforce d'accomplir : faire découvrir et activer les forces de la famille et de l'individu par des programmes et des activités de nature à développer l'estime de soi, à créer des relations interpersonnelles porteuses de sens et à promouvoir l'engagement au sein de la communauté francophone.

Il est opportun de souligner que le 28 mai il y aura une fête de reconnaissance, sous la présidence d'honneur de M^{me} la ministre, Madeleine Meilleur; de M^c Ronald Caza, parrain de cet événement; et de M^{me} Diane Doré,

marraine de l'événement. À cette occasion, les 175 bénévoles du Centre de services à la famille seront honorés.

Il me fait donc plaisir, en tant que député, d'annoncer cet événement et d'assurer notre appui au Centre de services à la famille car nous sommes convaincus que les familles en santé sont l'assise d'une province en santé.

TAMARACK HOUSE

Mr. Bill Mauro: TBayTel Tamarack House is a home away from home for cancer patients. The facility opened in 2004, changing its name from Amethyst House when it moved into the new building. The facility was named after the tamarack tree and reflects the north and the hardness of its people.

Tamarack House welcomes patients from northwestern Ontario who can stay there at no cost to themselves, their family members or other companions. TBayTel was a key donor in 2004 through a \$100,000 donation, and Tamarack House is funded through the regional cancer care program. This house is ably led by Dr. Scott Sellick, director of palliative and supportive care at Thunder Bay Regional, whose president and CEO, Ron Saddington, provides invaluable support.

Staying at Tamarack House reduces the financial burden associated with travel for cancer care. Four hundred new patients stay at the lodge yearly. In four years, the house logged over 15,000 stays at the lodge, and one third of those have been family members or other companions who have been of immeasurable support. More than one third of the approximately 1,500 new cancer patients treated yearly at Thunder Bay Regional come from many northern, remote and fly-in communities. Many come for complex radiation therapy that requires stays in Thunder Bay for up to eight weeks.

We have many to thank. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, through the regional cancer program, has partnered with the Health Sciences Foundation via the Northern Cancer Fund, which is part of the foundation and continually works to raise funds. I also want to congratulate Glenn Craig, the president and CEO of the Health Sciences Foundation, for his leadership and efforts to support the continued improvement of health care in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. David Orazietti: I rise in the House today to comment on our government's recently announced budget.

To help Ontario families, we are stimulating Ontario's economy while ensuring that we can continue to enhance important public services, including health care and education. We are accelerating an increase to the Ontario child benefit from \$600 to \$1,100 annually, two years ahead of schedule. This means that an eligible family will see their benefit increase from \$50 to \$92 per month for each child.

Our government also listened to businesses when we created this budget. We heard that the single most

important thing we could do to make Ontario companies more competitive was to implement tax reform. That's why we introduced a single sales tax, saving businesses \$500 million per year. That's why we cut business taxes by \$4.5 billion, which will give Ontario the lowest marginal corporate tax rate in North America. There will also be \$10.6 billion in temporary and permanent tax relief over the next three years, and 93% of Ontario taxpayers will pay less in personal income tax.

We are following the lead of four Canadian provinces and 130 countries, which all experienced growth after implementing similar comprehensive tax reform. Our government also made a timely investment of \$32 billion in infrastructure spending. This funding will stimulate the economy and create new jobs for Ontario families while laying the foundation for future growth in the province.

The headline in the Sault Star read, "Liberal Budget Gets Top Marks." In response to our support for the forestry industry, Mayor Rowswell said, "This is very important to the industry and St. Mary's Paper is taking advantage of it."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la politique sociale et je propose son adoption. I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption and send it to you by a page who will momentarily materialize—Mark.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 133, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000 / *Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne des questions de droit de la famille et abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la protection contre la violence familiale.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOXICS REDUCTION ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES TOXIQUES

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts /

Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à promouvoir une réduction de l'utilisation et de la création de substances toxiques et à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'll wait until ministerial statements.

WELECHENKO TRANSPORT LTD.

ACT, 2009

Mr. Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Welechenko Transport Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TOXICS REDUCTION

Hon. John Gerretsen: Today I'm proud to rise on World Health Day to introduce an important piece of legislation that, if passed, would help reduce toxic substances in Ontario, create a better quality of life for Ontarians and support the health of our families and our communities.

Our proposed Toxics Reduction Act is another in a long line of visionary yet eminently sensible actions that our government has taken to help ensure that we can breathe clean air, drink clean water and safely enjoy the land around us.

It addresses key areas of concern. Toxic substances are used in nearly all industrial and production activities. They're commonly found in products that we use every day and they can negatively impact our environment and our health.

Ontarians are truly concerned about the environmental and health risks associated with potentially carcinogenic substances. Recent polls show that 94% of Ontarians put toxics on par with climate change as a priority environmental issue that simply must be addressed. Our government has taken a stand to reduce the harm.

We have already taken a number of steps to reduce toxics in our environment, including working on steps to improve the health of the Great Lakes, updating air standards and diverting hazardous waste from landfills. We have also recently banned the use and sale of cos-

metic pesticides. But today we introduce proposed legislation as a cornerstone of our proposed toxics reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall our government's pledge to develop this strategy. We see it as addressing three issues: First, managing the use of toxics would improve the protection of the environment and human health; second, it would give Ontarians the right to know about toxics in their communities; and third, it would help ensure that Ontario is well positioned to compete globally and develop green chemistry alternatives.

Let me stress how critical this third point is to our future success and prosperity. We in Ontario all want a strong economy. We want a quality of life in clean and healthy communities. Ontarians believe, as we do, that indeed we can have both. With this proposed legislation, we want to ensure that the well-paying green collar jobs and investment resulting from innovation and scientific research into green chemistry will happen right here in Ontario. By doing so, we would help transform Ontario into a strong, competitive force in the new green global economy.

Our strategy augments the traditional "end-of-pipe" approach to managing chemical releases by placing a new focus on reducing the use of these substances at the front end of the industrial processes. If passed, the proposed Toxics Reduction Act would enable us to start rolling out the new approach. It would require facilities to track, evaluate and report on their current use and release of toxics, and it would require them to help develop a plan to reduce them both. A summary of each plan would be made public so that Ontarians are aware of industry's use and release of toxics.

We believe that we are taking a fair, rational and balanced approach, one that supports Ontario's businesses during challenging economic times and does not at the same time impose undue regulatory burdens on them. We also plan to ensure that facilities have the early technical compliance and financial assistance they need to develop their toxics reduction plans and to take early action to reduce substances wherever possible.

If this proposed act is passed, we would be investing \$24 million to help support industries in Ontario to transform their processes, find green chemistry alternatives and reduce the use of toxics in their operations.

We are confident that we are proposing the right steps. Throughout this process, we have benefited from the good, sound and scientific advice of Ontario's toxics reduction scientific expert panel, under the leadership of our co-chairs, Dr. Miriam Diamond, who is here today with her family, and Professor Linda Collins. Both are joining us today in the House, along with other specially invited guests who are in the gallery here at the east end of the building.

Ontarians see a link between reducing toxics in their environment and ensuring a healthy quality of life.

Our government has a vision for the future of Ontario, and this proposed legislation, this strategy, is a crucial part of that. If passed, the Toxics Reduction Act would

help us to better protect human health and be better stewards of the environment. It would ensure that Ontarians are well informed so that they can avoid those toxics that could be harmful. And it would encourage and support innovation in the use of more environmentally friendly replacement substances, which would ultimately make industries more competitive in the world's emerging green economy.

If passed, this bill would make Ontario the leading province in Canada on toxics reductions, and it would secure new jobs and investment at a time when our highly skilled workforce and diverse industries are eager for new opportunities.

Change will not happen overnight, but with support from all sides of the House for this legislation, we can begin the important work of reducing toxics and building a greener, healthier and more prosperous Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to respond. While today's announcement of Ontario's toxics reduction strategy has been much anticipated and long awaited—and we do share the goal of reduction of the use of toxics across this province—I do fear, like the precedent set by the pesticides legislation and the spills bill, for example, that this proposed legislation could quickly veer off course and lose sight of accomplishing its laudatory goals.

I would just go back a year and a half or so. It was on April 27, 2007, that we announced our PC plan to move on toxics reduction. As such, we have been somewhat bemused to see the McGuinty government follow our lead with regard to enacting a plan to reduce toxins.

It was September 24, 2007—I guess that would be about five months later—that the McGuinty campaign during the election mimicked the Tory platform. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Sorry, Minister. I'll continue.

For, example, the minister may recall we proposed drawing on the successful Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act—the acronym is TURA. Five months later, on September 24, 2007, the McGuinty Liberals proposed drawing on the successful Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act, TURA.

I will have more time during my leadoff to discuss the benefits of the approach we put forward at that time versus the one being proposed today. The basic differences are relatively simple and impactful, and these differences centre around the key element of working with the already established approaches to toxics management currently in place through the federal government and through business best practices, all the while providing those ever-important carrots, those incentives, along with the sticks, to ensure mutually shared toxics reduction goals.

1530

Think back to the spills bill for a moment. At that time, much as this government's own Industrial Pollution

Action Team and its recommendations to government with respect to incentives were ignored—tax-free loans, grants, things like that, in particular for small business, to achieve the clean environmental results that the spills bill was calling for—so, too, I do fear—we obviously have the same need for incentives to help deal with toxics, and I'm concerned these may be overlooked in the approach we see today.

I look forward, with respect to today's announcement, to working in this Legislature towards an effective plan that will see not only government but also business work together to reduce and, of course, where possible, eliminate the use of toxic substances and, as the minister has indicated, their related health and environmental hazards.

I do remind the House that on April 27, 2007, we put forward an election platform, if you will, based on the Massachusetts model. Five months later, the McGuinty government, on September 24, 2007, put forward a similar plan. I think it's very important to call for both incentives and the disincentives, or the sticks, to reduce and eliminate some of these contaminants. But we must work in harmony with the federal government and utilize that federal list of toxic substances. Of course, we agree to requiring business to disclose the use of their product to the public.

Of course, planning is important: Ensure that industry, including small business, has the wherewithal to be able to prepare a plan for reducing and eliminating the use of these toxins. Implementation clearly lies with the individual operation.

As far as incentives, we proposed a toxics reduction fund and we proposed other measures. I think of our proposal for targeted tax measures. Clearly, it's very important. We do have to help small business with some of these challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate you calling on me to speak to this matter today.

First of all, I want to thank those activists who have worked hard to bring this matter forward in this province: the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Environmental Defence, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition. I want to thank the members of the expert panel who spoke here today. I know that their speaking here today was the tip of an iceberg of a large amount of work done previously.

I'm sure that I've missed people, and I should mention political staff and Ministry of the Environment staff who worked on this, because there's no question that issues of consequence to this whole province don't simply fall from the heavens onto the desk of a minister. They come here because there has been pressure. They come here because people want action.

There's no question that in this province people are worried about cancer. There's no question they are worried about toxic contamination. Anyone who has

stood at the bedside of a family member or relative who is dying or suffering from cancer, anyone who has gone into the chemotherapy rooms at Princess Margaret Hospital and seen the young people and the old people knows that something has to be done. It's not all chemical contamination, but we know that it's part of what is going on in this province.

I'm not happy with the bill as presented today. I'm not happy with the bill, not because we don't need a bill—and I will be working in committee to strengthen it to the greatest extent possible—but because it is a watering down of promises that were made by the government in the last election when they said they would require reduction of toxic chemicals by companies. That is not what's on the table today.

I'm not happy with the government because we are simply in this province in an ongoing process of playing catch-up. While other jurisdictions, California and Massachusetts, have moved long before us, we are slowly catching up. That has health consequences and it has economic consequences. It has health consequences in those cancer wards, and you know that, Minister. It has economic consequences because the world is moving away from fossil fuels and toxic chemicals to green chemistry, and in both those fields, it's the jurisdictions that act early and act profoundly that develop a competitive edge, an economic advantage that will allow them to power their economies in the 21st century. Too slow, Minister, too slow.

You have an opportunity in the next month or two to amend this bill to make it much stronger, and you must make it much stronger. You should put in targets. If you want someone to do something, you set out what you want them to do and the time by which you want it done—if in fact you want it to happen. There are no targets in the bill. I heard the explanation in the press conference, and I have to say to you, as a person who sits in this House and looks at reports on this, that and the other thing that is done, that if there is not a target, it is extraordinarily difficult for us as legislators and for the public as a whole to hold government to account. For me, having a target is an important part of any bill.

I'm very concerned about this government bringing forward a bill when I am not certain that in fact it will be enforced. You, Speaker, have been in this House when we've seen the reports of the Auditor General about the failure to enforce the laws around hazardous waste. We've seen the reports of the commissioner on the environment about the failure to enforce certificates of approval. The question I have to ask myself is, are there adequate resources in this Ministry of the Environment to enforce the legislation that's being put before this House today? I would say, as of the moment, as of the evidence we have, that's not there.

Interestingly, in my last few minutes, there was a report in the Toronto Star today about a farm couple whose cows had been contaminated by water in a creek nearby, a legacy contamination. This government opposed the award to this couple, saying that this award

would set a precedent that would bankrupt the province. So the question I have to ask is, if someone has done the calculation as to how much contamination there is in the water in this province and knows that the volume of contamination would create demands for settlement that would bankrupt this province, where is the large-scale action necessary to clear up that contamination?

I say to you, members of this Legislature and those who are watching, if the government isn't dealing with our historic problems, how can we rely on them to deal with our current problems?

MAURICE BOSSY

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Maurice Louis Bossy, former member of provincial Parliament for Chatham-Kent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Pat Hoy: It is an honour and a privilege for me to rise today and pay tribute to a true gentleman, Maurice Bossy, who, first and foremost, was a family man in every sense of the word.

Joining us today in the members' gallery is his wife, Margaret, and one of their seven children, Andrew. Thank you for being with us today as we express our respect and admiration for a colleague.

Mr. Bossy was born April 1, 1929, and passed away on November 29, 2008. Mr. Bossy served in the Ontario Legislature from 1985 to 1990, representing the riding of Chatham-Kent. The riding had been held by the Conservatives since 1943, and in fact, in most elections up until 1985, the Liberal Party always finished third. Mr. Bossy changed all of that.

During his time in the Legislative Assembly, he served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing, parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for disabled persons, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on the Ombudsman, member of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, and also served as deputy whip.

Maurice also served in the federal House as the member of Parliament for Kent from 1980 to 1984. In Ottawa, he was Chair of the agricultural committee, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Supply and Services, and was also deputy whip.

1540

We recall his service for an important reason, because he made a difference. He made a difference to his wife through 59 years of marriage, to his seven children, 21 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He made a difference in his community. Mr. Bossy farmed most of his life in the Dresden area and worked 18 years with Canada Packers. For 10 years, he served on the Kent County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, including as chair.

For Mr. Bossy, it was always about family and community.

As MP, he brought the Judy LaMarsh building to Chatham, once the site of the region's Canada pension plan processing centre.

As MPP, the Thames riverfront improvement project in Chatham means tourists and citizens can walk along the river and enjoy it today and long into the future. And the Indian/McGregor Creek flood control project has helped prevent disaster in south Kent, including this past winter. These are government-funded projects that are having and will have long-lasting benefits for our community, thanks to Maurice Bossy.

In the eulogy at his funeral last November, son Gerry Bossy noted how his father dealt personally with constituents. An elderly lady had called his office saying there was a raccoon on her roof and what could the member of Parliament do about it? So Mr. Bossy hopped in his car, got a ladder, went up on the roof and managed to get the raccoon down and the lady was forever grateful.

Maurice was also great friends with the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, always loyal to him and a big supporter when he ran for the federal leadership in 1984. During Mr. Bossy's last days at home before his passing, Mr. Chrétien called him and they spoke for a long time. It was a very emotional moment for both of them. Both had come from big families and both had to work hard despite great odds to accomplish great things.

It was once said about politicians that you can work a lifetime building your reputation and one mistake can destroy it. But for Mr. Bossy, for his entire life, in and out of politics, his stellar reputation for honesty, hard work and commitment to family and community stayed intact. It never wavered through good times and tough times.

Mr. Bossy will be remembered by all who knew him for he is the true embodiment of a great Canadian, and that is perhaps the best compliment we can give Maurice Bossy and I believe the one that he would appreciate the most.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the official opposition to pay tribute to the late Maurice Bossy, the former member for Chatham-Kent, who died November 29, 2008, at 79 years of age.

Maurice Bossy contributed much to the quality of public life at every level in Chatham-Kent during his long and successful career.

Born in 1931, Maurice was educated at Pain Court Continuation School and received his licence from the Ontario Real Estate Board. He was also a farmer and then a salesman with a long career at Canada Packers.

Maurice spent 10 years as a trustee with the former Kent County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, including a term as chair. He was also a long and faithful member of St. Ursula Roman Catholic Church and a life member of the Knights of Columbus.

In 1980, Maurice Bossy was elected as the member of Parliament for Chatham-Kent. During his career in Ottawa as member of Parliament, he served as parliamentary secretary to the Secretary of State and parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Supply and Services. Mr. Bossy served in the House of Commons until 1984.

In October 2000, Maurice gave an interview to the local paper about the passing of a former Prime Minister. He was asked about that 1980 election campaign where he was quite straightforward in saying, "I campaigned on the promise to obtain more federal money for Kent. By the time the term was over, I counted on over \$30 million in federal money that had been injected into the Kent county economy."

Mr. Bossy lived up to that promise. He was a consummate local politician. He fought hard for his community to get funding for local projects. As the federal member of Parliament, he also got money that led to the building of the Judy LaMarsh building in Chatham and also obtained funding that led to the cleanup of the Thames River.

In 1985, Mr. Bossy was elected to the provincial Legislature of Ontario. I should point out that his win at that time ended 22 consecutive years of Tory representation in Chatham-Kent. Actually, in one report that I read, the riding had previously been called Kent West and had been in Conservative hands since 1943. Maurice was quoted on election night 1985 as saying, "There hasn't been a Liberal in office since before I was in school" in this riding.

While serving here at Queen's Park, he also served as deputy whip and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing. He was also very focused on the Thames River, securing provincial funding to help with the \$1.2-million riverfront beautification project in Chatham. This fit with Mr. Bossy's belief that increasing tourism in the Chatham-Kent area was his first priority.

I know that sometimes some of us can be overly partisan in this place, and I do have to admit that in 1985 I campaigned for the PC incumbent in Chatham-Kent and therefore against Maurice, but I don't think he ever held it against me. Despite that history, I want to say that Mr. Bossy made a great contribution to Chatham-Kent and to Ontario.

Since I know that no politician can achieve any success without the support of their family, I would like to pay tribute to his family for supporting his long political career and allowing him to make such a significant contribution to his community and to our province.

On behalf of the official opposition, I would also like to extend our condolences to Maurice's wife, Margaret, who is with us in the gallery today, accompanied by her son Andrew. In total they have seven children, 21 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

It was a pleasure to be able to give this tribute today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to stand up and address you, Margaret, you, Andrew, and, through you, the seven children, the 21 grandchildren and the four great-grandchildren of Maurice Bossy and to really pay homage to his memory.

We are a small town here, and I'm going to start where the member from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex left off, which is to say that we often recount all of the various accomplishments of our members—everything that they did. What we

don't often speak about is what this job entails, and you know it better than anyone else. You know it because you lived through all of the hours that Maurice spent away from you. You know it because you know the cost of public service, and you paid that cost along with him.

This is a very partisan place, of course, but in a very non-partisan way we're all members here serving our various constituencies. We all trust in what is right and we all try to tell the truth. We can argue about what is right, but you can't argue about the truth. So it's always an honour to pay tribute to someone who told the truth and who kept the greatest achievement going, which was your marriage of 59 years.

I know that many people in the community and all those who are watching at home have a very low vision of what a politician is and what a politician does, and we know and particularly our families know and you know that none of that is true. To a person here, many long hours are spent and many sacrifices are made. We have to reapply for our jobs, unlike other professions, every four years, and sometimes more often than that.

Maurice did all of that, and he did it for the right reasons. We none of us are here because of the money, for example, which is a common misrepresentation of politicians. Most members here would have done better financially in some other profession. I know that Maurice as a farmer probably would have done a lot worse, but that's only because I know about farmers. But it's not the money that motivates us, ever, and you know that better than anyone; it is the chance to make a difference in our constituents' lives.

I know, Margaret, that he wouldn't have been able to do it without you. You heard the member from Sarnia-Lambton speak to that. All of us know what our spouses also go through and the support that we have, so really, when any member stands here to speak, we stand here surrounded by a host of witnesses, and this host of witnesses are, first and foremost, our families, and second, and equally foremost, all of our constituents who sent us here to do a job for them that, quite frankly, is a difficult job they didn't want to do themselves.

That's what your constituents do, and that's where they sent Maurice. They sent him to Ottawa. They sent him here. They sent him into committees that would bore wallpaper. They sent him into partisan scuffles that would have frightened prize fighters. They sent him out at night to rescue skunks off roofs. They sent him out in the morning to visit workers at factories. This is what our members do, each one of them. This is what Maurice did. I wish I had known him.

1550

I certainly share his love of the issue of housing. I know he was the housing parliamentary assistant. He was here almost exactly the length of time that I will have been here by the end of this term. I know that this place was probably quite a learning experience for him after Ottawa and that Ottawa was a learning experience after his experience in business. I came from a business background in part as well, so I know the difference there, and he experienced that difference first-hand.

The bottom line, finally, for Maurice and for your family, your grandchildren and great-grandchildren, the legacy that Maurice left, a man who lived through the advent of the automobile, through depressions and recessions, through Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments—he lived through it all—is that of public service. There is no higher calling. You know that and we know that here. It's wonderful and a privilege and an honour to pay tribute to those who pay tribute to their communities, none better than Maurice Bossy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in tribute to the career of former member Maurice Bossy.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mrs. Bossy, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, our condolences to you and your family, and I will ensure that copies of the Hansard are sent to your family as a lasting memory of today. We thank you and your son for being with us.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to read this petition, collected at the Orangeville home show this past weekend.

"Whereas the residents of Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax ... that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Emily.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition has to do with property tax assessments.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are angry over the volatility of the MPAC tax assessment system, the near impossibility to

predict one's assessment or to understand how it is arrived at, the patent unfairness of assessments and that the current system leaves many homeowners worried they may be forced to sell their homes; and

"Whereas changes are needed that will make Ontario's property tax system stable, understandable, fair and sensitive to homeowners; and

"Whereas property assessments in Parkdale-High Park have risen between 28% and 45% between 2005 and 2008;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the 'freeze till sale' plan to bring fairness to Ontario's property tax system so that new assessments happen only at the time of sale and when a building permit is obtained for renovations totalling more than \$40,000."

I certainly agree with this. I'm going to give it to page Sarah to deliver, and I affix my signature.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and

"Whereas the average annual PM2.5 concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry's air quality index monitoring stations; and

"Whereas the interim 24-hour ministry ambient air quality criterion for PM10 was exceeded on several occasions; and

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and

"Whereas concentrations of toluene, xylene, styrene, ethyl benzene, trichloroethene and acrolein were higher than those at the 12 Environment Canada national air pollution surveillance stations in Ontario, including those located in Toronto (4), Brampton, Windsor, Hamilton, Sarnia, Kingston, Ottawa, Kitchener and London; and

"Whereas annual average 24-hour nitrogen dioxide concentrations were found to be among the highest when compared to provincial air quality index stations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed study area; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution

into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area.

I affix my signature and present it to Carmen.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O'Toole: "Whereas the proposed harmonization of Ontario's retail sales tax (RST) with the federal GST has the potential to increase costs to any small businesses and their customers; and

"Whereas these added costs would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times and organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders' Association" and consumers generally "have estimated that harmonization would add \$15,000 in taxes to the price of a new Ontario home;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of GST and RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes."

I'm pleased to endorse this by signing it and giving it to Olivia, in her last few days.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Kim Craiton: I appreciate the opportunity to read this petition to the House. The petition is signed by a number of people from my riding of Niagara Falls, including Kathy Fisher. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

1600

SALES TAX

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Mike Jackson, the owner of the GM dealership in Collingwood, for sending this petition to me.

"Whereas the auto industry in Ontario and throughout North America is experiencing a major restructuring; and

"Whereas the current economic crisis is affecting the auto manufacturers and the front-line dealerships throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas many potential automobile purchasers are having difficulty accessing credit even at current prices; and

"Whereas a three-month tax holiday of the GST and the PST on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks would stimulate auto sales;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the provincial and federal governments to implement a three-month tax holiday, and that the Ontario Minister of Finance include the PST holiday in the next provincial budget."

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it. I say to the government, it's not too late to implement this idea.

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It reads as follows:

"Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

"Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

"Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

"We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition, to acknowledge the help of the Lupus Foundation of Ontario and Niagara Falls and to ask page Olivia, on her last week with us, to carry it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with Burk's Falls health centre. It reads:

"Burk's Falls Health Centre Petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Burk's Falls health centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk's Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

"Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

"Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka–East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk's Falls health centre;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk's Falls health centre."

I support this petition and give it to Carmen.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition in support of Bill 160, to "Stop the Exploitation of Vulnerable Foreign Workers and Caregivers," from a group called Couples for Christ. They're from Mississauga.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support MPP Mike Colle's bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support protection for caregivers, and I affix my name to the petition.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's part of 15,000 signatures we have here.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should recognize the importance of rural health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network commissioned a report by the Hay Group that recommends downgrading the emergency room at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart ... Hospital in Petrolia to an urgent-care ward; and

"Whereas, if accepted, that recommendation would increase the demand on emergency room services in Sarnia; and....

"Whereas Petrolia's retirement and nursing home communities are dependent on easy access to the CEE hospital;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Erie St. Clair LHIN to completely reject the report of the Hay Group and leave the emergency room designation at Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia."

I will send this down with Emily. I agree with it.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have more petitions from people from Brampton and Mississauga in support of Bill 160.

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take the necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East LHIN address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to

offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington.”

I have signed this also, and Carmen is going to take this down to the Clerk.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition similar to the one read by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

“Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville’s hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

“Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000” people; and

“Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Health Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take” all “necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East LHIN address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington.”

I am pleased to support this, sign it and send it to the table with Noel, one of pages who will be leaving here on Friday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Thursday, April 23, 2009, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, and on Thursday, April 30, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

1610

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 5 p.m. on Monday, April 27, 2009. On Thursday, April 30, 2009, at

no later than 5 p.m., those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, May 4, 2009. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, on the day the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Who would care to lead off the debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It has to be her? Okay. It has to be the minister, I’m advised, to lead off the debate. Or we go in rotation. Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It’s a real pleasure. Well, it’s sort of a backward pleasure in the respect that here we are again. Here’s the Liberal government ramming things through. I say to you today that this time allocation motion 115 is a sign that they’re not even prepared to explain why they’re doing this. At least have the courtesy to tell us why you’re going to strangle the voice of democracy here today. It’s tragic.

When I look at the motion here, it’s a long, legally worded document. This is mainly for the people of Ontario. This sums it all up. The style of the government is here at hand. It gives absolute control, almost dictatorial control, to the McGuinty government.

I should say that I have prepared notes, and out of respect for the time allocation motion, we’re not debating Bill 163; we’re debating a time allocation motion which is overriding the democratic debate. They’re closing debate down. They don’t want to hear any more of the reasoned arguments from me or the stakeholders in the province of Ontario.

I would say to you that I'm new to this critic role, so to the viewer, please forgive me for the lack of detailed information that I have at my disposal, because Frank Klees took it all with him—oh, no, pardon me. I shouldn't be saying that. But what I am saying, though, is that I have been in touch with a number of stakeholders, and to those stakeholders, I'm depending on you to line up to express your feelings on this bill and put on notice that—look, I can assure you that with this time allocation motion they'll use the guillotine and it'll be finished. Even this debate is being considered to be irrelevant.

Here's what it says, and this is for you, the viewer. It'll soon be on the website. I'm sure it already is. They're so convinced that they rule the day, they don't even need to listen to us. There will be public meetings on this on Thursday the 23rd and the 24th, and then, on the 30th—pardon me; I'd better read this carefully here because I'm giving information out to the public. On Wednesday the 22nd from 1 till 3 and 4 till 6, and Thursday the 23rd, the same times, I gather, and then on April 30 there will be meetings for clause-by-clause in the event that they want to move some amendments.

I can assure you that there need to be amendments. This is the primary thing that my stakeholder groups have told me. They've told me in e-mails—I have an e-mail here already. This thing here, I should tell the viewing public and the members who are here listening, was introduced on March 30, then it was debated on the 31st, and now we have this time allocation motion. It's going to be heard by the end of April—all done. It'll be law in May, and they'll be pouring concrete in June. We're not opposed to that.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've got to explain the background for the viewing public, just slow it down a bit for the people of Ontario to catch on, to take a breath and to understand. They're spending \$9 billion. In fact, they're borrowing \$9 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, see, the people have to know that they have a deficit. The deficit is going to be \$14 billion, and they're borrowing \$9 billion to build some streetcar lines and bus rapid transit and rail infrastructure as well. Some of it we agree with. But wait a minute. What does Bill 163 itself do? It actually does two things. Fundamentally, it does a few more things, but some of them are treacherous, actually. What we're saying it does is, it throws the current Metrolinx board overboard, under the bus: "Good-bye." Do you understand? "Thanks for coming." It's tragic.

A few of them have spoken to me. I could mention them to you. Dictator Mayor Miller—pardon me, Mayor David Miller; Adam Giambrone. They were on the board. I would like to first thank the current—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Are they still the board, I wonder, legally? I think they just threw them over the side rail of the ship. I hope they thanked them, because they worked hard; I will say that. They had two reports before the

final report, which was called The Big Move. The Big Move report is a big, thick document, with a lot of pictures and maps in it, but not many pictures or maps of Durham, though. There's really nothing. There's a bus rapid transit, maybe, if we behave ourselves.

You like to thank Mayor Hazel McCallion. She, I think, was quoted recently in the media, saying, "Let's get on with it. What's the holdup here?" I think that Hazel McCallion always speaks the truth, or at least that I'm aware of, anyway. That has kind of been her motive, to speak the truth, as well as to get them going.

"York region chairman Bill Fisch was also good for a laugh when he proposed widening almost every major road under his control but claimed this was needed for 'transit lanes,'" and it was causing gridlock.

"When not clicking on their BlackBerries, Toronto mayor David Miller and Toronto Transit Commission chairman Adam Giambrone often steered their suburban cousins toward transit sanity."

I'm reading from an article here: "What if Metrolinx Started to Matter After All?" This is by Dr. Gridlock, Jeff Gray. He goes on in this article, which was issued on April 6, just yesterday, I guess:

"However, the last thing Metrolinx meetings needed was to get even more boring." This is an article by someone who watches this stuff. Here's another comment:

"Another time, Durham region chairman Roger Anderson said Metrolinx's plan to charge municipalities to oversee their transit projects was an 'I'm-going-to-watch-you-dig-a-hole fee.'" That's what he said. He said, "I'm going to watch them dig holes faster."

Hazel McCallion, mayor of Mississauga, "never afraid to speak her mind, warned once that Metrolinx was creating a 'bureaucracy that's second to none,'" except that the Smart Systems for Health Agency was a bigger one. "She didn't mean it as a compliment."

I think there's general agreement on this side, and I've heard our leader, Bob Runciman, and other members as well—in fact, we've had members asking about when they're going to get moving on projects. I would say that the member from Wellington-Halton Hills this morning had a question to the Minister of Transportation, or a statement, one or the other, "Let's get on with the plan to provide transit services," to his riding, as I myself have in Durham, to say, "When are they going to get on with it?"

1620

So on the one side this bill gives the impression that it's going to expedite this development of expanded transit. In fact, they've had a lot of fanfare, a lot of media, a lot of attention—they've announced it about four times since 2006—but they haven't really done much. They talked about doing the Union Station. That was on again and that was off again. They talked about doing a thing up through Greg Sorbara's riding: the York-Spadina subway. They've talked about a lot of stuff, and the Metrolinx board I don't think has had the proper mandate.

What did I say when they introduced the original bill? I think it was in 2004. I took the time to look up the

original bill, and what did we say? The governance model was wrong and there was no funding. On both counts I was right, because this bill, Bill 163, actually cancels the governance model. The governance model, as I said earlier, included four regions. I think each had one member. Toronto had four members. The city of Hamilton: Fred Eisenberger, who is the mayor there, I think was the only member from Hamilton. They had one or two from Peel region—one, I guess, probably Hazel; Bill Fisch from York region; Roger Anderson from Durham region; and Gary Carr. Joyce Savoline, who's the member from Burlington now, quite a good member, I would say, was on that board at one time. She sat on that board as the elected chair of Halton region, and now it's Gary Carr.

The key thing to that governance model was that the chair, who was Rob MacIsaac, and the vice-chair were both appointed by yours truly, Dalton McGuinty. How Metrolinx worked, or didn't work, was that they were given their marching orders by Minister Bradley: "You're going to a meeting with Metrolinx tonight and here's what you're doing." That's how it worked.

So what they have done now is clarified that. They've thrown all those regional chairs, highly regarded people, some of them elected, off the boat and they've appointed not an 11-member board; now they're appointing a 15-member board. Imagine how much that's going to cost. That raises a whole other question. We'll have to issue freedom of information before they get their offices fixed up too much. The new eHealth board spent \$50,000 fixing up an office—unbelievable. It's unconscionable.

I think really that this new board will have to give them the benefit of the doubt. They're all going to be political appointments. I understand that: Robert Prichard, a huge, big-time Liberal, former CEO of the Toronto Star, Torstar organization, a very intelligent man; I will say that. I'm not being critical of him as an individual. I just think he's going to do the bidding of Dalton McGuinty in the hope that he gets to be a senator or something; I don't know. But he is going to be there, leading the parade. I know he said he's not going to stay for long. I think once the thing gets going—when you flush out a lot of money quickly, it starts to worry me. Look at what's happened—Barack Obama: They won't ever find out where the first \$2 trillion went. I'm serious; \$9 billion? Keep your hand in your pocket, I'll tell that you. Keep your hand on your wallet. The price of everything will go up. But we have to get on to build transit.

The other part I mentioned was the funding, and even the initial response from the Toronto Star. I said this in my remarks the other day. The response in the paper was, "Where's the money?" I started off rather aggressively saying that they're going to borrow it. Well, they are going to borrow it. We know right now with the recession, the economic times we're in, the infrastructure spending, it's all borrowed money. It's future taxes, is what it is. It's future taxes for the young people, young families. That's what it is, and it staggers me. Actually, we always remember what happened to Bob Rae when he

started going downhill. He tried to tax, he raised the price of energy, he raised the price of compensation, and I think he even raised all the fees for licences and everything. Dalton is basically on the same bent right now. He's got the HST out there and is probably going to gain another \$3 billion or so a year. He's got the health tax out there. Now, I think this is—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: What I'm told—this is important for the record—is that theoretically they're going to surreptitiously invoke tolls on many of what we would call arterial roads and provincial highways. I would not be surprised, and this could be—

Interjection: You're making it up.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. It's already been in the discussion papers. They're going to have tolls on roads. That's one of the ways they're going to pay for this.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, no. Dalton never tells the whole story. No, no, they're announcing in this legislation that there are going to be financial arrangements made with different partners, they call it. It's the language. You have to be a lawyer to appreciate it, and some of the people who are speaking back aren't, so they don't know what I'm implying here. I'm not a lawyer either, by the way. I don't want that to be misunderstood.

There are other things too, though. What I'm hearing from stakeholders—and I want this to be on the record clearly because I'll be sending this out to them on this time allocation motion. They're trying to shut people up is what they're doing, and the stakeholders will be very interested. One of them said, "How come there's no municipal representation?" This is a proposed amendment here in public, as we're moving through. I would suggest that they could win a lot of friends—we'd like to see them get on with this, but a little bit of responsiveness is in order.

We're just doing this right on the fly because this thing's being rushed without due consideration, but I put it to the viewers today—some of whom I phoned to say that this was up today, surprise, surprise—that even if they put the AMO chair or past chair on there, that's not a bad idea. They flow all the gas money which goes to transit through AMO, so there's a very positive, constructive observation and suggestion. Now the past chair is a very good friend. He's a former Liberal, or he still is a Liberal. Once you've had the Kool-Aid, you never give up. What's his name, the former chair of AMO? There's a new chair now.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario could sit on there and be a nice bridge, arbitrator, mediator between the unelected 15-member board—probably most of them will get a day retainer. It won't be much, probably \$1,000 a day or something like that. Holy smokes, I hope they don't have a lot of meetings. I don't expect them to do it for free, unless of course they just want to do public service. But they could solve a problem there by having AMO represented on the board.

I've heard, and the distinct observation is, that some people are disappointed. They understand, first, that the

municipal representation was often parochial. In other words, it got in the way of implementing the smart card, the transit card. I understand that. Maybe we could eliminate some of this parochialism or this ability to not find consensus by having one respectable member from the AMO organization on the board to bring consideration to the issues of the municipally elected people. I think that's extremely important, and I would encourage it. In fact, I think it's an Ottawa member now who's the head of AMO.

The other part, too, that I would encourage would be ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association. A part that's missing in this big plan—by the way, this plan is a lot of money. We just heard the first blush of \$9 billion. The plan is \$50 billion. We start talking about billions like they're \$100 bills. We're starting to ramp it up. We're starting to sound like Barack Obama—trillions. It's scary because this is all taxes. This is money we don't have. It's like arguing against motherhood. Some things are very important. Probably some of these pages here take transit. Do you take transit here each day?

Anyway, I'm just saying it's important, but by the same token, we have to have things that are affordable. Let's put that whole issue of how this thing's going to be financed, the \$50 billion, into perspective. Move 2020 is the big plan for transportation. It's a big fancy word. People can look it up on the Ontario website and they'll see the Move 2020 plan under transportation, and then under it, they'll see the Big Move plan. The Big Move plan is really big; it's \$50 billion. That's \$5 billion a year for 10 years. There's no assurance that they're going to have the federal government ponying up the big money. There's no assurance that the municipalities will have any money left. They've already hit the tax ceiling, so where is this money coming from? Is it going to crowd out spending for roads and bridges for rural Ontario?

1630

Rural Ontario is getting left behind, ignored. They don't get any of the gas tax money. Today, not a nickel of the gas tax money at all goes to rural, small-town Ontario unless they have a transit system.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're wrong.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from east of me—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Agriculture says "a minor point." My goodness. Transit for rural Ontario is called roads and bridges, and the member—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'm going to get to you in a minute here.

The member Mr. Rinaldi from Northumberland—Quinte West was the mayor of Picton, I think, wasn't it?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: No. Wrong again.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, there you go; that's two mistakes. Maybe the next time I'll be right.

He was the mayor in that part of eastern Ontario. He should know full well that they don't get any of the provincial gas tax money, unless it's for Handi-Transit or

municipal transit; otherwise, they don't get any of the gas money. That's the only money they get.

The federal money comes, though, and this is perhaps where the member's getting confused. The federal money is not discriminatory. The federal gas tax money goes to all the municipalities, all—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: —the federal money. The provincial gas tax money does not go, unless it's to transit. It cannot be deferred. And many of the municipalities cannot use it, by the way. The small municipalities that get the provincial gas tax money, which specifically defines how it can be used, cannot use it for operational funding, and they can only use it for capital funding. Most of them can't spend the money. They don't qualify for spending the money. They show that they get it, but they can't spend it.

I would say that we spend a bit of time on the money part, but the \$50 billion, the big number in The Big Move report, could crowd out other spending. My priority would be people first—people first. When we're in social times, as we are now, where the economy is collapsing—over 300,000 families have lost their job; their primary breadwinner has lost their job—I think you should have the control in cabinet, and I would expect the ministers and the Premier to honour their commitments to having a safe, fair society and good health care and long-term care for seniors, those kind of things.

It's all great stuff, but transit is like plugging in a hot water heater. It's going to always be on and it's always going to cost you money. It's not always being used, but you're always paying huge operating costs, big-time operating costs. I would say this: There's no transit system in the world that operates revenue-neutral. On the good side of this debate, it's important to know that GO Transit—I'm not all negative on this. I use GO Transit, and a lot of members here, I'm sure, use GO Transit coming into Toronto; and we need the TTC. We need it to be timely and efficient and affordable. So there are a couple of good things here.

GO Transit operates with about 82% of its total operating revenue from the fare box. It's one of the best in North America, so we should be proud of the GO Transit system. We all could improve. They have their problems with the switches in the wintertime. They have their problems with the CN agreement that they have for the actual tracks and hardware and, I think, the operations as well. There are only very few actual GO employees on the system. It's mostly CN employees.

But I should tell you this: One of the reasons they're very efficient is that GO Transit operates quite differently. My hat goes off to the employees and the employee groups. They work split shifts, because in transit, you move 100,000 people in the morning, and then you move 100,000 people at night going home—to and from; the start and end of work shifts. But during the day, there's nobody on them. There are very few people on the trains. In fact, during rush hour, the trains run about every 15 minutes on the Lakeshore line east, and I take it.

I think it's—I have it on my BlackBerry—at 6:13 it starts. The last sort of express train leaves the station, I believe, before 7 o'clock, and from then on, the trains are every hour. So if I miss the last train that's express out of Union Station to Oshawa, I have to wait for an hour. After 7:30 at night I could probably be home in an hour and 20 minutes, certainly to Oshawa, and I live about 20 minutes past Oshawa. So what I'm saying is the GO operating staff come in to work at about 5 in the morning and around 10 they're done, and then they go home or somewhere for two or three hours, and come back for the rush hour at night. That's a pretty high level of demand for GO employees, to work what I call a split shift. I hope they're compensated fairly. I'm quite serious about this. Having worked in industry myself for 30-plus years, I know that people would work continental shifts, like 10 hours, but not split. They were very averse to split shifts.

I would say the other part, on the good side there, is the fact that GO does get a lot of its revenue from the fare box. What it really means is that the toll they're charging—in my case it's about \$12 round trip to Toronto and back—is a reasonable amount of money, because if you were to drive it would probably cost you \$10 for gas and \$40 for parking. So it's a fairly reasonable fee, if you look at the real cost of getting to and from your place of work or entertainment. In fact, they even have special services for things like football games and hockey games and stuff like that, which is important too. So I think they've got customer-friendly service. I think they're doing their best to enhance that, and Mr. Smith, the chair of that, should be commended. He's also going to be on the new transit board as well.

Now, TTC is quite a different problem. I'm not complaining. I do use it if it's bad weather; I normally walk up from Union Station, otherwise it would cost me about \$2 or \$2.25 to come up on the subway from Union Station to Queen's Park. I'm a cheapskate, so I usually walk it, but it's better than having a gym membership which I never use. Exercise is just walking instead of getting in the car. You can save the gym membership.

But my point there is that even now I think there's a little balance in Toronto—and I'll leave this to the NDP. I think the fees for transit in Toronto—you may only go four, five, six blocks—are getting a bit high. And for affordability, the most obvious consumers are people of modest means. So there's a balance between how much you can charge and the impact on ridership. They may charge more and the revenue will go up, but they'll lose riders. In fact, there was a report the other day that said the ridership is dropping a little bit.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: They're only going five minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: And it's five minutes over time.

But the key there is that on transit—and it's a secondary point that I want to make, as I've made this generously to Minister Bradley before. I introduced a bill about three or four years ago which would have allowed the provincial government to initiate a tax credit for an expenditure when using public transit. Now, in fairness, it came to me from two of my constituents who also use

the GO train, who I saw a few times, and they said, "You're Mr. O'Toole," and all this stuff. "It's nice to see our provincial member riding on the GO train," and I said, "Yes, I'm a person, too." Anyway, we got talking about it, and they said to me—I hadn't really thought of it the way they explained it. They said, "Do you know it costs us \$100 a week to commute to Toronto?" I said, "Oh, is that true?" and they said, "Well, yes, and there's two of us. That's \$200 a week. That's 50 weeks; that's \$10,000." I just about fell off my rocking chair—\$10,000 to commute from Durham to Toronto to work. Holy smokes. That's getting expensive. So I heard them—and I'll be honest with you: We get compensated to commute to work, which most people don't. Of course, I wouldn't be coming here if I wasn't required to be here, so I say that as well.

The other thing, too, though, is that I introduced a bill, because of my constituents' suggestion—I wouldn't use their names—and what it did was say that every expense for the purpose of using public transit would be a tax receiptable and refundable. It would be a refundable tax credit.

1640

Lo and behold—I was so honoured—I had a call from Jim Flaherty, the Minister of Finance federally. I know him. He's a very approachable fellow, a great guy, actually, and I used to be his parliamentary assistant when he was here.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: He's a Liberal.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, he's quite liberal. He's a nice fellow; I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: He's in the Liberal government in Ottawa.

Mr. John O'Toole: He's doing a very excellent job in Ottawa, and I shouldn't digress here.

He's called me personally. He said, "Look, we're going to implement your idea." I said, "Well, it's not"—I had the privilege of my public role here, but I said, "It's two of my constituents. Maybe you should call them." And I said, "I'll have to call you back if they want their names released."

But to get down to it, he took the idea and ran with it. I went directly to Greg Sorbara. I went to him and I said, "Look, Greg, it's a good idea." Neither side of the House has a franchise on good ideas. If we're all listening to our constituents, we'll probably get good ideas without any political hang-ups attached to it. That I leave on the table for Minister Bradley and for Minister Dwight Duncan.

For that matter, the Minister of Agriculture is here today. She's a very professional person. She knows a good idea when she sees it. The celebration of agriculture yesterday was to meet the new deputy minister. A great guy; I've met him before, and I think he'll do a great job. That was a great celebration. Agriculture is very important to Ontario.

Again, you could just bring that to the cabinet table. You're a member of cabinet, and you're one of the shooters there. Just take the idea and run with it. If you do, I'll be the first one to give you credit, because ulti-

mately, it comes from the people of Ontario, and you've got to make transit affordable. That's the real point here: Make transit affordable.

As a matter of fact, the argument should be this: Any expense for the purpose of earning income, under the Income Tax Act, is tax-deductible. If you're self-employed—that's the condition here—if you're self-employed, any expense for the purpose of earning income is tax-deductible. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka would know. He's a small business person, and he always speaks of small business, all the time, actually. I would say that he would know that.

It is important that people who are going to and from buying computers, hooking up Internet connections and all these things—in fact, as I look at the young pages here and my own children, I would say, in five years, why would you be coming to Toronto if you worked in the financial services sector? I have no idea why you would be coming here. It could all be done online. It's called "telecommuting." I have a son-in-law who is a securities lawyer. He worked at Cassels Brock here in Toronto. He was recruited and now is a securities lawyer in the Isle of Man. The Isle of Man is a tax haven. It has a flat tax, virtually, on investment income. He does all these transactions online. His office is one block from his house. That's the future; the future is telecommuting. If we make commuting affordable—that's another part of this bill.

I go back to the basics, the fundamentals of this—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's to get your attention again—I say two things: What's the rush here? Let's get it right. You tried it back in 2006-07. You've thrown the whole thing overboard and started again. It's not called Metrolinx anymore; I think it's called some other name. All of these people will have to be severed, of course. They'll have to be given severance packages. It will cost a couple of million dollars, maybe—who knows?

But what I want to say as well—I've kind of gone through the governance thing. We get it; you've got to change it. Add a municipal representative. We've given you the suggestion. Use the AMO rep. Run with it. You'll probably have our support on the bill.

The second part is, how are you going to finance it? Come clean with the people of Ontario. It's going to be a P3 project, most of this stuff; we know it is. Otherwise, who is going to finance it? You're already in debt. You're going to be borrowing it from somebody. You could raise some new type of bond, transit bonds or something. Be inventive, innovative.

Consult with some of the riders as well, the rider groups. I can tell you that Transport 2000 is quite an eclectic group of individuals that I have spoken to over the years. They write a publication, and I'd encourage members to log on to their website and look at it. I was speaking with the current chair—Natalie is her name; I'll just leave it at that. She was saying that she thinks some of these groups have a lot to offer to the improvement of transit in Ontario, and there are others as well.

I would say Durham region should be considered. I think I said this the last time I was speaking. I'm trying to use all the time that I can here, but also make some points. We talked about the funding, and we talked about the transit tax credit.

Here's the second shoe to drop: Let's not think that the world begins and ends around Hazel McCallion.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. Mississauga has all the stuff they need. They've got more highways than Durham will ever have, they've got more transit than anybody ever needs, and they've got a great mayor. I'm not criticizing Hazel, but I would like her to support our voice for Durham. There's a ton of money here for Bill Fisch in York region. I get it; they've been working on transit. Durham region is a growing community. It's about 600,000 people now. It's bigger than most provinces, and it has basically been ignored.

I'm surprised that Wayne Arthurs isn't here; he normally is. I was talking to him earlier. He's a good member. He was the mayor of Pickering and a great friend; I consider him a friend—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I just need to remind the member not to make reference to the absence of another member.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thanks for that helpful comment; that's good. But the member is a good friend of mine.

I would just say this: We know that there is basically only one road going into Durham. It's called the 401. They had been talking about the 407 into Durham further than it is. It goes into Brougham right now. We need that extended.

And with the 407, when they're digging up all those trees and plowing under all that greenbelt land that you greenbelted—which is exempt from the Green Belt Act, which is another conundrum—here's the issue: Get on with it. Build a transit link while you're doing it. Transit should be an integral part of the 407. I put that on the table for you. We need to have it, and we need to have it now.

Durham will be 800,000-plus. We have a new nuclear plant being built, I hope, and I hope it's Candu. I've asked the minister to give Canadian technology the nod. Come on, let's keep Canadian jobs and Canadian technology. The Candu plant for Darlington: Let's get on with it. We need to be smart and business-oriented. It's a technology that's proven safe and reliable, and it's already operating at the Darlington station, Pickering station and the Bruce station. OPG is going to be the operator. They're already familiar with it. There will be no problems with the transition. If you pick a new technology, you'll have a whole new world under your door.

But I would say that the key there is that with that new-build nuclear, it's probably about a \$10-billion project—and the expansion of the 407 will probably be another \$3 billion or \$4 billion—there's going to be a lot of growth. We have a very optimistic future in the riding of Durham, and the region of Durham for that matter.

We need the government to know that we are there and co-operative, and all levels of government, including myself, are willing to work with the government without throwing in roadblocks, or political excuses. I would say that this is a good way to start, with Metrolinx. As part of the Big Move plan, we did have what they call a bus rapid transit system proposed—not funded this time, not yet anyway—along Highway 2, which would basically go from Clarington, Bowmanville through to Durham region.

I've saved one point for the last couple of minutes I have. This is critical. Some of the members here aren't interested in transit, but the best way to integrate transit and the most important move—and I'm sharing this with the minister—is the smart card. This is the card that's used similarly in other jurisdictions. It's used in the Bay Area Rapid Transit system in California. It's used in London, England. It's called the Oyster card, and all it really is is a card that manages the accounting in the background: how much money goes to each transit system. If the rider gets on in Durham and gets off in Halton, the card will determine which transit system they used for what portion of the trip, and that portion of the money would be transferred through electronic funds. That's critical. Just think of the operational savings with the smart card. When I get on the GO train, there's only a random check of whether or not you have a ticket. That's how that works.

Interjection: The honour system.

Mr. John O'Toole: An honour system. When you get on the TTC, there are attendants everywhere. I read the \$100,000 list; some of the ticket takers are making \$100,000. They must be working a lot of overtime—a lot of overtime, all the time.

1650

With a smart card, I would say it would be like the 407. You don't see any of these toll booths on the 407; it's all electronic. That's how this should be run; it should all be electronic. I think that has been the holdup. I think the TTC have a log across the tracks. They're saying, "No, we're the biggest part of the transit system. Here's the technology we're going to use." They want a prototype technology. Why don't we just copy a proven technology that's used in Chicago, London or in California? Grab it, pay for the patent rights and use it. This whole idea of proprietary software doesn't integrate well with various financial institutions. They'll spend millions developing that card. When it's already working, let's use what already works.

Just think for a moment; we're talking, what? The potential user package on this is around 2.5 million people out of 13 million. California has 30-some million people. Get with the game. Use the technology that they use on BART, the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, which is totally technology. In fact, in the trains, there are no drivers. It's all automated—a totally automated system—and they're controlled through central control. That's the future. If you look at this bill—we're very disappointed that they've used a guillotine motion, time-allocated and

stymied debate on such an important technical investment on behalf of the people of Ontario. I just can't believe it, that they're ramming this through like they're stuffing a cannon and they're going to blow up somebody with the cannon. It seems patently unfair that I've been given such a minimal amount of time to make my remarks.

The member from Pickering is now here. I'm happy to acknowledge that, and the reason I say that is that I had introduced him to one of the constituents who wanted to speak to him, and I said, "The man you should speak to is the member from Pickering-Scarborough East—he's the person to speak to." Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would request unanimous consent from everyone here that the independent member, namely myself, have a chance, just for two minutes, to speak on the motion we're talking about right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to speak for two minutes to this motion. Agreed? Agreed—rather, it's not. Consent does not exist.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would respectfully ask this House for unanimous consent to give the independent Conservative member 10 minutes of the 40 minutes' time allowed the New Democratic Party caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Welland is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow the independent member to use 10 minutes of the time allocated to the New Democrats. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I was not trying to be greedy or anything like that. I've been here for a while, since 1990, and all parties have used this tactic to get things through the House, and it's unfortunate that we do that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Not all members have supported it.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: That's right. I want to thank the member from Welland for giving me a little extra time.

I just wanted to get my point across to the governing party right now that this doesn't work very well. It didn't always work when we were in government; it didn't always work when the NDP was in government. I know you'll get your bill through, but unfortunately, it causes problems within the House. Sometimes you do want to get along with everybody in here. When you put bills through with a motion like what's on the floor right now, that the next time we speak on that bill it's going to be rammed through, it doesn't go over very good. All of us didn't get a chance to talk about it.

If you look at the motion that's on the floor right now, it says that when the bill comes forward, the time will be allotted to the recognized parties of the House. Well, from time to time, I may not be the only independent in this House, and that doesn't allow other independents or myself, when this bill comes through, to be able to say

anything in third reading if we vote on this bill. Now, I want to tell the governing party right now that I've been quite pleased, since I've become an independent, that they have worked quite well with me. They let me know what's going on in the House all the time. Now we're at a point, though, where I can't support the motion that's on the floor because in that motion it says that when that bill comes back for third reading, I will not have a chance to speak on it.

I may have something to say about it; I may not. It's a transit bill for down here in the city, and I think the people who represent the city of Toronto should have all kinds of time to speak on it. It doesn't matter what party you're from; you should have that chance because the bill directly affects you, and it does affect us all to the point where there's going to be a lot of money spent.

I think that with a bill like that, there should be more time. When you ram it through the House, all you do is cause problems. You make the people on this side of the House, and maybe even some of your own members, disappointed, because they don't get a chance to speak on this bill.

It's not only the bill that we're talking about now, the transit bill; there are all kinds of other bills where this happens. I'm not totally blaming the government of the day for doing this, because we've all done that. The Conservatives did it and the NDP did it, and it never makes for a good House here when you do things like that, because sometimes it would be nice if we did work together. When you do things like this, it certainly upsets a lot of people.

I understand that sometimes you have to do this because you say, "Look, we have to get this bill through," but if you let everybody have their say and then vote on something, they feel a lot better. Even though you may not win that vote, at least you had a chance to say something. But when you do it this way, you certainly curtail the chances of everybody in this House having a chance to say something.

That's why everybody got elected. They got elected to come to this place and say the words that they think the people in their ridings want them to bring here, and in doing this, that won't happen. I know that a lot of times you don't have to deal with independent parties or independent people, but in this case you do have an independent here. From time to time, there could be more than one, and they should have a chance to speak to whatever bill.

What happens if you come back here now and try to put closure on the budget for third reading? That would really cause some problems, because I don't think everybody has had a chance to speak on that, and who knows what's going to happen after third reading?

Then you have amendments. That's what this place is supposed to be about: to bring a bill forward, debate it and then send it back for third reading for amendments. Do you not think that everybody should have a chance to speak to those amendments? They may feel there's something there that has changed, and they may approve of it, but they may not.

I'm speaking on the motion that's actually before the House right now, and it would be nice to see you throw those kinds of things out and not do it. I know that sometimes you have to, but if you want to try to get along—you have two and a half more years in this House with the same government—maybe you could change things like that.

I appreciate the time I've had to speak on this. Those are just a few words I wanted to bring to the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to stand and speak in this House, always. It's interesting today, though, in particular because the member who just spoke, spoke as an independent and didn't take his full time. It was an incredible act of generosity by our own House leader, the member from Welland, so we owe him a thank-you.

In terms of the closure motion that's before us, there's only one thing to say: that this flies in the face of democratic process. We all know that. And what's even worse is that the government won't speak to it, won't defend it. This is outrageous behaviour on behalf of a majority government. A majority government that can do anything it wants, and does, is now trying to do that much more with its clout, and that is to stifle debate and refuse to justify stifling debate. I can't imagine anything that's less democratic than that kind of move, particularly when, of course, back in the days of Mike Harris, they were so vehemently opposed to any closure motions. Now that the table is turned and they're sitting in the seat of power—I guess we should be students of history in that regard—they do what they complained about the Harris government doing. In fact, they do a number of things they complained about the Harris government doing. That's one of the fallacies, for those at home watching this, that the province of Ontario operates under; that there's a qualitative difference between the McGuinty Liberal government and the Mike Harris government. Increasingly, the McGuinty Liberal government is showing itself to be a Conservative government. Now, with this move of closure, of course it is.

1700

What is it attempting to close debate on? Bill 163. Let me tell you how this bill looks to my community, first and foremost, and then I'll draw broader conclusions. How would it feel, government members, if you were to wake up in the morning to piledriving? It's an unbelievable noise. If you ever stood next to one, you'd need earphones. Imagine living next to it and that piledriving happening all day long. That is what's happening in parts of my neighbourhood right now, around Hook Avenue. I know that the Toronto Star and CBC Radio have picked up on this. It has driven businesses literally out of our riding. It has literally affected the health of seniors and residents in the riding who are home all day. That's what's happening right now.

The question is, why isn't GO doing something about this? I had a meeting with the executive of GO. They came to my office at Queen's Park. Here are the answers

they gave: First of all, they said they couldn't do anything about it and, secondly, they said they shouldn't do anything about it—couldn't. I said, "Why can't you? Isn't there technology available that quietly accomplishes the same task, or at least more quietly?" They said, "Well, yes, there is." They admitted there was; we know there is. So the question is, why don't they use it? "The company didn't come forward with a proposal." Never a discussion about how maybe they should have gone looking for a proposal, proactively seeking out an alternative to this horror that the residents are living through. They said they couldn't do it. The bottom line is, when the truth is told, that it costs more. They didn't want to spend the money.

Then the question was, aren't there noise laws against this? One would think with piledriving next to your house, surely there's some regulation or legislation that can be brought to bear upon the situation. No, because it's federal lands. Very interesting—CN, federal lands. So one has to complain to the Canadian Transportation Agency to see if they will investigate. Now, that takes months. Meanwhile, of course, you see what's going to happen. As the piles are driven, as the mission is accomplished, this moves down the rails into another riding, into another community. By the time this is investigated by the CTA, they've moved on to another community and the original complainants are left with businesses that have been affected, with homes that have been affected etc.

I called a community meeting and got GO there. GO did not want to meet with the community. They would only meet with hand-picked members. This is an example of what it looks like when you have an agency that is not responsive to its public. We've lived through that in Parkdale-High Park; we know what that looks like. Quite frankly, it's going to get worse, because what's going to happen with the government's program is that we're going to have diesel rail cars running through there about every 15 minutes. When I asked Mr. Bradley, the transportation minister, why not electric, he said—guess what?—it costs more. The rights of all of those individuals who live around the railroad track are not as important to this government and to this transportation minister as that bottom line.

It's kind of an interesting bottom line, isn't it? This is when I come back to the fact that this is a Conservative government we've got here. Meanwhile, \$4.5 billion—an astronomical amount of money—is going to corporate tax giveaways. What this government is essentially saying to those people on Hook Avenue and other areas of my riding is that they don't have enough money to really guarantee those residents' safety, that community or the environment around them, because diesel is polluting—it's not green, it's polluting—but they do have enough money to give to corporations like SNC-Lavalin, which, by the way, will be a partner in one of the first publicly-private owned rail lines because, really, this is about privatization, folks. Bill 163 is about privatization. So SNC-Lavalin is going to be one of the partners that's

going to partner with the government in building one of those rail lines, the air-rail link. Isn't that interesting? That's coming down the pipe. That's why they want to rush through this bill, rush through a new form of governance that, like the OMB, like the new Human Rights Tribunal and like MPAC, is not accessible to the public, is not transparent, does not have on its board elected officials, but has bureaucrats. And who are these bureaucrats? These bureaucrats are those hand-picked by the McGuinty Liberal government. If there ever was a Conservative trick, that's it. You hand-pick your friends and the big donors and you give them cushy jobs on the boards of these bureaucracies that are then in charge of spending tens of billions of dollars of public money.

The poor people on Hook Avenue, whose walls are shaking, whose fathers are having heart problems, whose mothers are suffering from migraines, wait in line. Meanwhile, you're giving \$4.5 billion away in corporate write-offs to companies just like the ones that are pile-driving next to homes. That's what this is about.

We've seen it before, anybody who's been before the Ontario Municipal Board: We have lots of Davids fighting against that Goliath across Ontario and across my riding, some of them successful, some not so successful. They go up against a board where their adversary has lawyers and city planners and endless amounts of money, and they, meanwhile, have to take a day off work just to appear there. They don't have the resources for lawyers, they don't have the resources for city planners on their payroll, and they have to defend themselves. To whom? Not to elected folks, again, not to anybody who is really responsive to their needs; no, to a bureaucrat who is hand-picked, hand-selected by the government in power. That's the OMB.

MPAC is the same. MPAC is basically a semi-private corporation. It comes in, assesses and tells you what your house is worth. It doesn't matter that the real estate market has dropped; it doesn't matter, the fact that your house is not worth what it was a year ago. You'll still pay taxes based on what it was a year ago.

I want to repeat that this is not about transit. That's the smokescreen. That's the photo-op cover, that this is about getting transit built faster. We are in favour of transit. The folks in my riding are in favour of transit. We want more transit, not less transit. We want more transit. That's what we want. This is not about that. This is about the governance, merging Metrolinx and GO together, kicking off the elected representatives. That's what this is about. Just wait as they start rolling out from this new governance body all the publicly-private owned partnerships that are going to be responsible for transit. They did it in Vancouver under the Campbell government. It's not working there—speak to any activist about transit—and now they're doing it here.

It's sad. People who live in my community worked very hard to refurbish Sorauren Park and to refurbish a little community field house there, the Wabash field house, are now concerned that the children, the 16 teams of little kids who play soccer there, are going to be

playing soccer next to a railroad track where diesel trains are going to be running by up to every 15 minutes. Why not electric? Why not clean? Why not green? No. It's cheaper this way. It doesn't cost as much. Why? Because we need money to shovel out the door to large corporations to the tune of \$4.5 billion, to the corporations, might I say, that need it least. After all, you don't pay taxes if you're not profitable, so tax breaks don't help companies that aren't profitable, and that's a whole lot of companies in Ontario right now. Most small business I know is not profitable right now. They don't pay taxes because they don't make profits. They only pay taxes on what they take out of the business.

These tax cuts are going to go to those corporations that need them least. We all know who they are: the banks, the insurance companies etc., the large corporations that aren't suffering like the ma-and-pa stores at the corner, that aren't suffering like some other industries that desperately need government money and that aren't, by the way, getting it.

1710

It was interesting the way this played out too, because the one day that they announced Bill 163, this new bureaucratic organization that they're going to create away from public scrutiny, that's going to meet behind closed doors, the very next day they give \$9 billion to the city for transit for the TTC. As journalist Jeff Grey said, "\$9 billion is a nice way of saying you're sorry." No kidding.

But, again, are we pleased about that? Absolutely. There was a day when Ontario, the province of Ontario, paid for 50% of transit costs. That day has come and gone. That's what New Democrats would want to see again, a day when the province steps in and pays 50% of transit costs and makes it a priority so that people can take transit.

The member from Durham was talking about the commute from Durham and the expense of that. I remember living in Richmond Hill and the expense of that commute. And at a certain point, people just say, "I might as well drive. It's no more expensive to drive." That is not what we want in the province of Ontario.

What we want is a transit system that is affordable, that is accessible and that people have a say about and a stake in, and they don't have a stake in it and they don't get to say anything about it if the governance body is meeting behind closed doors. And they certainly don't get a say in it if their elected representatives on this side of the House don't get to speak to it, because that's what we're elected to do.

Then—again, adding insult to injury here—the government refuses to even back up their own piece of legislation by speaking to it themselves and justifying it. We don't hear in this House why this closure motion has been brought forward. So, again, the question really here is democracy, accessibility, transparency. We're going to pay for it with the bill itself in terms of the transparency, the accessibility to Metrolinx-GO or whatever this new agency will be called; we're going to pay for it in not

being able to speak to the closure motion or to speak to that bill from the desks in the opposition; and ultimately it diminishes the House itself, it diminishes the Legislative process itself when a majority government acts like an oligarchy and not like a democracy.

I'm going to leave some time to my friend to speak, as he will, and he has lots to say about the perspective from his place in Hamilton. But suffice to say, from my community's perspective there are a few key demands.

The key demands are these: Whatever happens with Bill 163—and clearly the government's going to force this, ram this through without debate—what needs to happen for them is that they need to be included. They and all members of our constituencies across Ontario need to be included in the discussions and transit plans for their own communities. They need to be included in that.

The process needs to be transparent. The process needs to be green; no diesel trains, please. Pile-driving has to be done with sensitivity to those living near the piledriving sites. Again, this comes back to that accessibility and transparency and community involvement. That has to happen. It can't be done on the cheap, it can't be done willy-nilly, it can't be done behind closed doors, and it can't be done the way that this is happening here, which is to say with the power of money and authority basically running roughshod over democratic rights and transparency.

So with that, here's hoping. My groups are coming to depute before the committee on April 28 and 29. Hopefully, the government will listen to what they're saying. I mean, it's actually quite staggering that here we are, and this is how behemoth this beast of government is, that we can't turn it around a little bit just to stop the piledriving next to a community. It stopped for the CBC; it stopped when the CBC reporter went out to interview the inhabitants because, of course, GO and the company that's doing the piledriving didn't want the sound broadcast. They stopped for the CBC. They stopped for the demonstration we had there and then they started right up again—very cynically, right after the cameras left, right after the reporters left, back to piledriving. That's what the people are living with.

I present the petitions about transparency at Metrolinx-GO, whatever this new agency is going to be called. I present petitions saying, "Please, no diesel trains. Please, consultation with the community." I get back and they get back from the Minister of Transportation: "Don't worry. Don't worry. They'll have consultation." Then, of course, we have a structure that really does not facilitate consultation at all, that in fact precludes consultation from the public.

Another day that piledriving is going to be happening to the residents of Hook Avenue. I know my colleague will want to speak to this. The rail cars, hopefully—we don't know where they're going to be produced at this point. They are going to be travelling along that rail line but they will be, of course, burning diesel, polluting the neighbourhoods they go through, and not electric, which is where the rest of the world is going.

Again another closure motion, another stifling of debate, and this time a slight twist, the twist being that at this point there's not even a justification for the closure motion. With that, I'll conclude, and I look forward to the deputations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in the House today to speak in favour of the time allocation motion on Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006.

This legislation, if it were passed, would merge GO Transit and Metrolinx to build transit faster and ease congestion as well as creating jobs. We believe that a single transit agency is needed now to implement the regional transportation plan quickly and efficiently.

The regional transportation plan, which was appropriately named The Big Move, is a solid plan. It was shaped by municipal leaders in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area who understand first-hand the need for transportation in our community and the challenges facing this region. Ontario is ready to fit the pieces of the regional transportation plan together to build better public transit faster.

Our government has introduced legislation that would, if passed, merge GO Transit and Metrolinx through the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act, 2009. We want to create an organization with the necessary expertise to implement an integrated transit network for the most populated region in Ontario. Our government is ready to take the regional transportation plan and implement it.

Metrolinx has demonstrated its planning expertise with the development of the regional transportation plan. GO Transit has a strong track record of building large-scale transit projects and running transit operations and services. By bringing these two organizations together, we'll get the shovels in the ground faster on many new and wanted transportation projects across the province, transit projects that would generate thousands of construction jobs over the coming years and a stronger economy.

The economic, social and environmental benefits of moving more quickly on transit projects will be substantial. With more people on transit and fewer cars on the road, we'll reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are widely known to harm our environment.

The McGuinty government has made transit one of our top priorities, and we've made record-breaking financial commitments in the process. Our commitment to the regional transportation plan of \$11.5 billion still stands as the largest single commitment in Canadian transit history.

Our transit agenda is ambitious, but with a new Metrolinx we can build stronger sustainable communities with a renewed transit infrastructure that will promote a higher quality of life for everyone. By creating a single regional transportation body that is properly equipped, we are putting the right tools in place for taking the

regional transportation plan off the drawing board and into service. There are tools that would allow the new Metrolinx to build the necessary infrastructure, deliver better service to customers through new transit projects and pay for the asset over the long term.

1720

Our proposed legislation will, if passed, provide Metrolinx the important permissions it needs to help the environment in Ontario. In fact, the proposed GO Transit expansion in Georgetown would provide those important environmental benefits in my community of Brampton. For every 10 cars the GO service provides, it takes 1,500 people off our roads. The Metrolinx regional transportation plan estimates that over 30,000 people will use GO services in the Georgetown corridor by 2031 during the a.m. peak hour alone. That's 25,000 cars off the road. The air-rail link ridership is forecast at 1.35 million passengers on start-up, growing to over three million by 2025. That's 1.1 million cars off the road in the first year alone.

Rail transit uses less fuel and generates fewer greenhouse gas emissions than automobiles or buses. Moving several million passengers from automobiles to trains will result in a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to the province's reduction targets.

Now is the time for Ontario to build on this momentum and to build a regional network with quick commute times, easy connections and a renewed focus on customer service. We know that building new transit projects will benefit our economy, our communities and our environment.

I encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First, I'd like to address the problem of the lack of participation from the government side in discussing this bill. This time allocation motion is extremely inappropriate on something as important to the people of Ontario as transportation. This is a major thing that's going to happen to our province in the next few years, and it requires a lot of input from the public at public meetings. Two or three days is not enough to get their perspective, especially from my community in Hamilton.

There are two or three projects slated for Hamilton. That falls far short of what we really need in the city. It's a start, I guess. But I was hoping to see, in the initial plan, something from James Street to the airport. That seems to have been put a little bit on the back burner.

In reference to some of the things that are going on in Toronto, I'm very displeased with the fact that they say they don't want any elected officials involved. What are people here for? The people elect these people. They feel that these people are going to represent them. These people are supposed to have a handle on the issues. Will the public get all the knowledge they require from a few public meetings, or would they get more feedback from the people who represent them in their community? I

think they would get more from the people who represent them. That's why they elect people to come to this House.

First, it's not clear that Metrolinx and its current board of directors are considered dysfunctional. By most accounts, the board was actually functioning well. It had developed a good balance between urban and suburban perspectives. It had worked out good links with municipalities. It also had some clout because when elected officials stood up, people listened because it was clear that they had a constituency backing them up.

Some might say that the board didn't approve projects fast enough; that it, in fact, slowed down projects. But what it did, I think, is ask questions about projects where questions needed to be asked. The board of Metrolinx had developed solid expertise and was starting to deal with substantive issues of revenue tools and specific priorities of the plan.

It should be remembered that the regional plan is by no means set in stone or worked out in detail. Key decisions still need to be made, particularly as it becomes clear that not all the priority projects will likely be funded as expected.

Will a new board with a significant number of inexperienced members be able to make these difficult decisions? I'm not sure. Will more time be lost bringing new board members up to speed? Yes, I believe it will. Is it really beneficial to rid the board of all elected officials? No, I don't think so. What is the rationale for doing this?

This leads to my second concern. Will the new board be accountable and transparent in a bureaucratic sense? There are fears that future meetings will not be open. There's a real danger that having unelected board members and potentially closed meetings will do away with the transparency that now exists. For example, under Bill 163, capital plans will no longer have to be made public. Given that the capital plans are perhaps the single most important element of a new transit initiative, why is this requirement to make these plans public being removed? Already Metrolinx did not have the greatest record in consulting on capital projects. Apparently, staff sometimes claimed to have consulted with municipalities when they didn't. This new requirement will only make such consultation less likely.

There are dangerous examples in Canada already of regional transit authorities which have undergone transformations into closed, self-serving and unresponsive entities. I'm thinking here of TransLink in BC. TransLink underwent a transformation under the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act, which was introduced by the Liberal government in 2007. As Bill 163 proposes to do in Ontario, the BC act replaced a democratically elected TransLink board with a group of hand-picked individuals. Soon afterwards, the board decided that it would no longer be necessary to have its meetings open to the public. Can you imagine that? A board not being allowed to have public consultation, but they're spending public dollars. It doesn't add up for me. Instead, meetings were assigned a small amount of time

to allow feedback from pre-registered speakers, with the bulk of the proceedings taking place in camera. Soon after, the TransLink board members gave themselves a 500% pay raise—500%—just weeks after Vancouver transit riders were hit with the highest fares in the country. Is this the kind of reform we want in Ontario? I don't think so.

Third, it is unclear whether a new regional super-agency that is without municipal and regional representation will take into account the local needs. Many of the transit systems that Metrolinx oversees are, of course, regional, but Metrolinx will also oversee local transit systems, such as subway extensions and new LRT lines.

Local priorities are different from regional needs. For example, a local priority might be to have numerous stops on the LRT line with medium-density development along the line. In contrast, a regional priority might be to have only a few stops in a high-density development at those nodes. How will Metrolinx, as a regional body, take into account and represent these local needs?

Fourth, it is unclear that merging Metrolinx and GO Transit will do anything to address the primary blockage to implementing the transportation plan with adequate funding. The Metrolinx regional transportation plan is slated to cost \$55 billion, but there's no clear indication of where that money will come from. The Metrolinx board was going to wait five years before it discussed financing options. According to this bill, it will be at least another four years before we even have a proposed investment model.

The McGuinty government announced \$11.6 billion for Move Ontario, but this money is still not out the door. The government has announced a ream of new projects, but they assume that Ottawa will kick in billions of dollars for them, something that hasn't yet happened. Federal money comes with strings attached, as we all know, and doesn't necessarily address priority needs, as the recent federal funding for expansion of parking spaces at the GO station showed.

If there have been problems in getting capital funds to build transit projects, there has also been utter silence on how the operation of the systems will be paid for. Groups were hoping for some clarity in the 2009 budget. They didn't seem to get it. Instead, money was announced for highways, \$3.2 billion over two years; and transit, \$3.7 billion. But it is unclear how much, if any, of this money is going to be directed through Metrolinx as part of the \$11.5 billion that has been committed.

1730

Fifth, the whole issue of owning assets raises grave concerns for me. The bill appears to create a big super-structure, a model like there is in Vancouver, where one superboard oversees and owns a variety of sub-entities. We could see Metrolinx overseeing one body that owns subway lines, one that owns light rail, and so on, all as part of a parent company. Worse, we could see a move towards private enterprise with this superbody. There appears to be a real danger that the bill will move us into

the dangerous direction of private-public partnerships. Once again: private partnerships—scary thought.

Are we looking at the selling off of the Spadina subway line, for instance? Would that be your next move, to sell off the Spadina line? Is this privatization exercise a disguise? Again, let's move forward on public transit, but let's not mess with our privatized bodies, like the TTC, that operate well. P3s are simply not a good model. Previous examples, such as the Brampton hospital and Highway 407, have not worked out.

The provincial government can borrow at the lowest interest rates available, so why add a private sector partner when costly financing is not to the public's benefit? The private sector is already involved in consulting, supplies and construction. It should be limited to these additional services, not core services. We have already seen the legacy of private sector consultants with Metrolinx, which had been locked into an arguably overpriced contract for Presto smart-fare cards with consulting giant Accenture.

My sixth concern: It is not clear that the new agency will be any better than Metrolinx in shifting the emphasis away from highway expansion towards public transit. We know that highway extensions act like magnets for new sprawl, which only drives further expansions of those roads. We know that highway expansion removes significant vegetation, destroys wetlands and threatens ground-water recharge areas.

We know that we need to build communities that are sustainable, communities that have transit systems and that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not encourage them. That means that no highways should be proposed until a viable transit option is available to those communities, yet the regional transportation plan, even 25 years into the future, would still leave us so heavily reliant on highways that it won't significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The plan proposes new highway extensions north, east and west of the city to communities already fighting the problems of urban sprawl, and could threaten community health and safety. Metrolinx has outlined transportation corridors under study, all of which could be further new highway expansions. The major transportation corridors under consideration would connect the communities of Guelph and Bolton, bisecting the greenbelt and putting pressure to develop unprotected agricultural and natural areas adjacent to the highway expansions.

Last week's budget shows us that the McGuinty government itself is still more committed to highways than transit since it aims to increase highway spending even as spending on public transit is slated to decrease. MTO needs to shift its focus from highways and road building to transit, pedestrian and cycling infrastructures, as outlined in Places to Grow. It should put a moratorium on all 400-series highway expansions while the Ministry of Transportation updates its modelling to incorporate present-day realities, such as higher fuel prices, reduced demand for housing, distance from urban cores, and climate change impacts. It should shift money currently

budgeted for 400-series highways to supporting the implementation of the Metrolinx provincial transit strategy, and it should—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's pretty hard to hear myself, Speaker. There's a lot of noise over there. It should develop clear criteria for provincial infrastructure support to municipalities to ensure that the funding is based on the advanced Metrolinx transit plan.

Seventh and finally, we need to make sure that Metrolinx supports rather than undermines strong local plans for transit. In 2007, the TTC set a bold new vision for expansion with its new Transit City plan. The plan proposes building seven new light-rail rapid transit routes, namely, streetcar lines with dedicated lanes. In total, 120 kilometres of service will be added for the entire city. By 2021, the new lines would carry 170 million riders per year. The estimated cost of building the Transit City route is \$6 billion.

The province committed to significant funding through its Move Ontario 2020 plan, but now it is not clear how Toronto will pay for the operating of these new lines when it can barely afford to run the system it has today. Now Metrolinx is considering privatizing subway expansion inside and outside Toronto over light-rail options in the city, potentially threatening the funding promise for Transit City.

The Yonge and Bloor subway lines have been a huge success, but subways are not the right answer for every transit route. Subway lines are best suited for medium-distance trips in areas with exceptionally high ridership and density. The city and province ignored this principle when they built the Sheppard subway line. Most streetcar lines and bus routes carry more passengers than this subway does. More people would be riding transit in Toronto today if this subway had never been built. Why? At just under \$1 billion, the TTC could have bought 500 new streetcars and installed track on new routes. Instead, the streetcar service in high-ridership areas has declined, because of service cutbacks, by 30% on the Dundas Street route alone.

In 2005, the government subsidy to the Sheppard subway was approximately \$8 a rider, compared with a city-wide average subsidy of 40 cents per rider. The Sheppard subway is an example of politicians abandoning their plans and priorities when making decisions. It may not be an isolated mistake. The city and province are currently spending time and resources on other super-sized transit projects, like the proposed York University subway line. Metrolinx is on the verge of recommending more subway lines to the detriment of cost-effective light-rail transit options.

Building an effective regional local transit system is a complex matter; let's make sure that Bill 163 is going to help it along rather than stall it. I firmly believe that, sometimes, if people would listen to input in committees and also when people stand up in the House, they might get a lot more out of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 115. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1738 to 1748.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Delaney, Bob	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Gravelle, Michael	Mitchell, Carol	Sousa, Charles
Hoy, Pat	Moridi, Reza	Van Bommel, Maria

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bailey, Robert	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Bisson, Gilles	Miller, Paul	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	
Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 13.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE AT SCHOOL), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (SÉCURITÉ DE NOS ENFANTS À L'ÉCOLE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act/ Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Durham.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I've been advised by the table that the member for Durham has already had the opportunity to speak to second reading of Bill 157.

Further debate?

Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): So ordered.

Orders of the day? Once again, I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1752.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, France Gélinas
Lisa MacLeod, Gerry Martiniuk
Julia Munro, David Ramsay
Lou Rinaldi, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craiton
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadi
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Oswaldo Ramirez
Mr. Jim Wilson 5953

Patricia Moore
Mr. Michael Prue 5953

Bangladesh
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti 5953

Renewable energy
Ms. Sylvia Jones 5953

Le Centre de services à la famille
M. Phil McNeely 5954

Tamarack House
Mr. Bill Mauro 5954

Ontario budget
Mr. David Oraziatti 5954

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on Social Policy
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri 5955
Report adopted 5955

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

**Toxics Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 167, Mr. Gerretsen
/ Loi de 2009 sur la réduction des toxiques, projet
de loi 167, M. Gerretsen**
First reading agreed to 5955

**Welechenko Transport Ltd. Act, 2009, Bill Pr23,
Mr. Murdoch**
First reading agreed to 5955

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Toxics reduction
Hon. John Gerretsen 5955
Mr. Toby Barrett 5956
Mr. Peter Tabuns 5957

Maurice Bossy
Mr. Pat Hoy 5958
Mr. Robert Bailey 5958
Ms. Cheri DiNovo 5959

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Taxation
Ms. Sylvia Jones 5960

Property taxation
Ms. Cheri DiNovo 5960

Air quality
Mr. Charles Sousa 5960

Ontario budget
Mr. John O'Toole 5961

Cemeteries
Mr. Kim Craitor 5961

Sales tax
Mr. Jim Wilson 5961

Lupus
Mr. Bob Delaney 5961

Hospital funding
Mr. Norm Miller 5961

Protection for workers
Mr. Mike Colle 5962

Health care
Mr. Robert Bailey 5962

Protection for workers
Mr. Mike Colle 5962

Hospital funding
Mr. Bill Murdoch 5962

Hospital funding
Mr. John O'Toole 5963

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation
Hon. Monique M. Smith 5963
Mr. John O'Toole 5963
Mr. Bill Murdoch 5969
Ms. Cheri DiNovo 5970
Mrs. Linda Jeffrey 5973
Mr. Paul Miller 5973
Motion agreed to 5976

**Education Amendment Act (Keeping Our Kids Safe
at School), 2009, Bill 157, Ms. Wynne / Loi de 2009
modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation (sécurité de nos
enfants à l'école), projet de loi 157, Mme Wynne**
Second reading agreed to 5976

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 7 April 2009 / Mardi 7 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Budget Measures Act, 2009, Bill 162, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2009 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 162, M. Duncan

Hon. Monique M. Smith	5931
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	5931
Mr. Bill Mauro	5934
Mr. Mike Colle	5937
Mr. Jim Wilson	5939
Mr. Peter Kormos	5940
Hon. Jim Watson	5940
Mr. Toby Barrett	5940
Mr. Mike Colle	5941
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5941

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5941
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5941
Mr. Tony Ruprecht	5941
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	5941

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Frank Klees	5941
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5941

Energy rates

Mr. John Yakabuski	5942
Hon. George Smitherman	5942

Provincial purchasing policy

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5943
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5943

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5944
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5944

Electronic health information

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	5944
Hon. David Caplan	5945

Automotive industry

Mr. Paul Miller	5945
Hon. Michael Bryant	5945

Agri-food industry

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	5946
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	5946

Doctor shortage

Ms. Sylvia Jones	5946
Hon. David Caplan	5946

Steel industry

Mr. Paul Miller	5947
Hon. Peter Fonseca	5947

Post-secondary education

Mr. Bruce Crozier	5948
Hon. John Milloy	5948

Taxation

Mr. Tim Hudak	5948
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5948

Poverty

Mr. Michael Prue	5949
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5949

Public transit

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis	5949
Hon. James J. Bradley	5949

Smoking cessation

Mr. Peter Shurman	5950
Hon. Margaret R. Best	5950

Tuition

Mr. Rosario Marchese	5950
Hon. John Milloy	5950

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

2009 Ontario budget

Motion agreed to	5952
------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

GO Transit

Mr. Ted Arnott	5952
----------------------	------

World Water Day

Mrs. Carol Mitchell	5952
---------------------------	------

Child poverty

Mr. Bill Murdoch	5952
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
X1
-023

Government
Publications



No. 134

N° 134

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

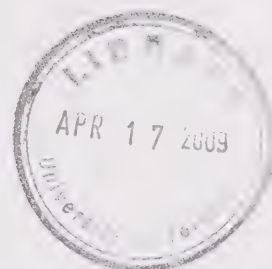
First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Wednesday 8 April 2009

Mercredi 8 avril 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Mr. Bradley moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / *Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to continue debate on important legislation that, if passed by this assembly, would make Ontario safer for drivers and everyone who shares our province's roads.

I will be sharing this time with my parliamentary assistant for transportation, Linda Jeffrey, who will resume debate on this legislation. May I at this point in time pay tribute to Ms. Jeffrey for an outstanding job. Some of us get the title of minister, and what you find out if you're a member of this House, particularly if you've been a parliamentary assistant, is that parliamentary assistants provide the kind of support and hard work necessary to ensure that bills are passed. So never be fooled by titles as being of significance; rather, it's the people who are doing the tough slogging. Both in the House and in committee, Ms. Jeffrey has provided the kind of assistance that has been required. I am delighted that as a result of that, she has shown a great knowledge of the legislation, of the appropriate procedures in committee and the House, and I pay tribute to her for that.

In addition that, Michelle Baker, who is my legislative assistant, has been working extremely hard, both with the parliamentary assistant and with me, in providing the necessary information. So sometimes if we happen to occasionally look good, either in committee or House, or out in the scrums, it's because of the staff that we have in some cases, and in other cases it's the parliamentary assistant who is providing that.

I want to say first of all that I have appreciated the kind of interest that has been shown in this bill by all members of the House from the discussion of it coming

forward to its introduction to its second reading and then going through a committee of the Legislature. I've been impressed with the degree of interest. I think that's because matters of driving and safety on our roads happen to be of great interest to all people and all of our constituents.

I know that some of the government members and opposition members have worked hard again to try to ensure that the appropriate debate has taken place on this legislation and that suggestions have been offered. In some cases, those suggestions and recommendations will manifest themselves not within the legislation itself, but within the regulations that flow from the bill.

For those who may be watching at home at this time of day or on the replay of the Legislature, what does happen is a bill is first of all introduced. Normally, they receive unanimous consent to introduce them on first reading. On second reading there is an extensive debate on principle, looking at all aspects of the bill, and then we go to committee if the government and opposition agree it should go to committee.

Our government has, I think, made it a point always—I could be corrected—to go to committee, for two purposes: One is so that the public can have input, and second, so members in committee can discuss the bill in detail and offer suggestions as to what amendments might take place in the committee or later in the regulatory framework. When the committee has completed its work, it reports to the House and then third reading debate takes place.

A number of years ago, third reading didn't take place in this Legislature; it was passed on a nod. We have established a practice in recent years where, from time to time, there is third reading of a bill, and that is kind of the wrap-up of it. But I do want to point out that what happens after that is that the government develops regulations to go with the bill, and we have given an indication to all members of the committee and the House of the direction we're moving in for certain regulations. Subsequent to the passage of any bill, we still have an opportunity to consult on the regulatory framework, which are the details of the bill, if the House deems it appropriate to pass it. Then, of course, if the Lieutenant Governor deems appropriate, it is signed and proclaimed into law. With bills of this kind in particular, safety bills, what tends to happen is, initially there is an educational period for people—because this is new to some people; the changes will be new. We have to ensure that people know what those changes are, and there is an educational period of time. We do that with a number of bills.

Motor vehicle collisions, I think all of us realize, cost our province dearly. Almost every day in Ontario someone loses a loved one as a result of a collision on our roads: a friend or a parent, a son or a daughter. Many people have gone through this tragedy in their own personal lives. It is extremely sad because it's not something that's anticipated; it is often a shock, and of course the sadness lingers for some period of time.

Approximately two people are killed and 10 people are injured each and every day on our roads. I recognize that we're a large province. I think our population is around 13 million in the province of Ontario now. Geographically, you could put three, four or five countries in Europe into the province of Ontario. We have a lot of vehicles on our roads, we have pedestrians who from time to time are on our roads and we have bicycles that are on our various roads. Still, approximately two people being killed per day and 10 injured is, while if we compare to others a very good record, one that we wish would have zero people killed and zero people injured.

To make this situation even more unbearable, the majority of these tragedies—and I think all of us realize this—are actually preventable. In Ontario, about a quarter of all fatal collisions are unfortunately alcohol-related. Excessive speed and loss of control were key factors in almost half of all fatal collisions. In spite of extensive educational campaigns in the province, one third of drivers and passengers killed on our roads were not wearing their seat belts.

0910

To those of us in this House that may be a surprise, particularly those who have had road safety as one of their interests. My friend from Durham, who has been the critic and writes me lots of letters about matters related to transportation, is one, along with Mr. Klees, who was the transportation critic previously for the Conservatives and the minister, and Mr. Bisson, the member for Timmins—James Bay, who has a special interest in transportation—all of us recognize that in spite of these extensive education campaigns one third of these people were not wearing seat belts. It's hard to believe, but it is true. It's something we all have to remind ourselves of. The number of injuries and fatalities on our roads must not be overlooked.

I should share with you a little story at the present time that I thought was instructive of how this is a bit generational. The younger generation tends to be more inclined to put seat belts on. If you watch a young driver, a young driver automatically gets in and puts the seat belt on. Older drivers sometimes do not, and probably all of us have been guilty at one time or another; we're going down to the corner store or something of that nature and think, "Well, nothing can happen from here to the corner store."

I recall, and this was really nice to see, getting into a vehicle when I was almost late for a meeting and I had to park far away. I knew the people who lived in the house near the—it was a CAW hall in this case. So the woman of the house, the mother, said to me, "Why don't you hop

in the van and I'll take you over to the door of the building, because you're going to be late otherwise." So I got in the van thinking, "Well, I'm going a couple of blocks," so I did not put my seat belt on right away. The two children in the car immediately said to their mother, "Mommy, we can't go yet. The man doesn't have his seat belt on," and I thought, "Wow. This is really impactful." These young kids knew that you don't get in the car without putting a seat belt on. So there I was, getting a lesson from these two kids. Now, this is a few years back, before I was Minister of Transportation; it doesn't matter. I think what happens is that is more of an inclination of people who are older than people who are younger—and particularly young children.

It really gets to the heart of this act that is aimed largely at trying to make even better drivers of our young people who are drivers today. I complimented a previous government in the 1990s for introducing graduated licensing. That was the government where Premier Rae was the Premier and I'm trying to remember which of the ministers—I think Gilles Pouliot may have been the Minister of Transportation at that time when it was introduced.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What was introduced?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This was the graduated licensing. I think there were people apprehensive about it at that time; the usual arguments came up. It was a departure; remember? It was a departure. I think that's one of the best steps that was taken in road safety in the province of Ontario, because what it aimed at was making better drivers of younger drivers, and almost to a person, despite significant exceptions, younger people at least have a better technical knowledge of driving and probably better attitudes in many ways than their predecessors who got behind the wheels of cars, because people of my vintage did not have to take much of a driving test. It was about a 15-minute driving test and the toughest thing was parallel parking. These kids go through a lot of steps now—

Interjection: Thanks for coming out with all these new tests.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can say to members of the House that I know the young people of the day felt that the government of the day, of Mr. Rae, was imposing upon their rights and freedoms and so on, perhaps being mean to them, when indeed they were bringing about legislation that would help. So in the longer run, these people have often maintained those good habits.

I see my good friend Bill Murdoch coming into the House at the present time and want to note his presence and express concern that his Montreal Canadiens lost their last game and are just holding on to a playoff spot at this time. I did want to acknowledge Bill. I know that has nothing to do with this bill but it does with that Bill.

We introduced, then, the Road Safety Act. It's a comprehensive piece of proposed legislation that targets some of the most persistent and dangerous behaviours on our roads today. Changing driver behaviour is, as we all know, a tremendous challenge. Over the past five years,

this government has demonstrated its ability to rise to the challenge of making our roads safer again and again. We have taken steps that not only save lives and prevent injuries, but give our police services the tools they need to keep Ontarians safe: safe while they're behind the wheel of a car; safe while they are heading off to work, returning home or picking up a loved one.

Our government has a legacy of taking action to keep our roads safe. Four years ago, our government made the use of booster seats and child car seats mandatory to protect our very youngest and most vulnerable passengers. We made improvements to Ontario's graduated licensing system to better protect teens while driving at night. And our one person, one seat belt, requires every person in the vehicle to buckle up.

More recently, we significantly increased the penalties for drivers caught street racing, stunt driving or exceeding the speed limit by more than 50 kilometres per hour. These drivers clearly have no place on our roads. To date, police have taken more than 11,500 dangerous drivers off our roads under this law.

We've also changed Ontario's impaired driving laws, with tougher sanctions for drivers who repeatedly drink and drive in what we call the warn range, which is between .05 and .08 alcohol content in the blood. These latest measures come into effect on May 1 this year.

We've also proposed legislation that would make it illegal to use hand-held communications and entertainment devices while driving. With this action, we are tackling the increasing problem of driver distraction—drivers who talk, text message or dial when they should be focused on the task at hand, the task of driving. Our message to drivers is a simple but important one: eyes on the road, hands on the wheel.

My friend from Durham would agree with that and brought forward of his own volition legislation forward in this regard, along with some other members—I know my colleague from Oakville brought forward legislation in this regard—and was persistent. He will know that when he started out there were a lot of people who mocked it or said he was imposing on their rights. I give him full credit for being persistent in this regard. I think that many thought this would be an imposition a few years back; today it's fairly common to see jurisdictions doing it. He had done his research on other areas that had implemented such legislation, and I know he is supportive of it and I appreciate what he has done, along with my friend Mr. Flynn, from Oakville.

I look forward to continuing the discussion on this important piece of legislation. Our tough action has raised awareness of the consequences of dangerous and aggressive driving behaviour, especially among young people.

Today we are proposing to build on these successes with improvements to Ontario's graduated licensing system—changes that will better prepare young drivers for the reality of today's driving environment. First, we plan to give young and novice drivers more time to get the experience and skills they need for a lifetime of driving. This means extending the time it takes to get a full

licence from 24 months to 36 months. For those novice drivers who pass a ministry-approved beginner driver education course, we will provide a possible time discount of six months. Escalating sanctions mean a driver would face penalties that get tougher with each serious violation of our province's traffic laws.

As all members are aware, drinking and driving continues to be a major problem on our roads. Research shows that the peak ages for drinking and driving collisions are the ages of 19 to 21. This is why we are proposing that all drivers age 21 and under have a zero blood-alcohol concentration when they are behind the wheel of a car. Of course, with more than a quarter of all collisions involving alcohol, we know that drinking and driving is a much larger challenge. I might note at this point that I think I'm correct in saying that all states in the United States now have that rule: no drinking and driving; up to 21, no alcohol in the system.

0920

Police are asking for more effective tools to deal with drunk drivers and get them off our roads once and for all. Anyone caught driving drunk or driving without an ignition interlock when one is required could face the immediate roadside impoundment of their vehicle for seven days. The same would go for anyone who continues to drive while their licence is suspended. The ignition interlock is something where someone must breathe into the apparatus, the ignition interlock, before they can get behind the wheel of a car. If they have a certain alcohol content, they are not going to be able to drive that vehicle; the vehicle cannot be started.

Our government has taken the issue of road safety very seriously. We have acted decisively to keep drivers and passengers safe. We are giving our police services better tools to help keep us safe. We are providing new drivers with time to develop better skills that will give them the confidence they need to stay safe for many years to come. We're getting tougher with drivers who continue to drink and drive. We're taking the right steps to keep our young passengers safe. We have taken new approaches to overcome many of our road safety challenges. Our actions over the years demonstrate our purpose.

Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America, and are getting even safer. We invite you to join us in our quest to save even more lives. To do this, we must change our laws and educate drivers and passengers on the consequences of disobeying the rules of the road and the laws that keep all road users safe. Regardless of years of experience, all drivers in Ontario need to get the message: Safer roads are a shared responsibility. We cannot do it alone. By working together, we can prevent injuries and deaths, and reduce the number of collisions on our roads. Together, we can reach our goal of having the safest roads in the world.

I know that all members of this House, regardless of their political affiliation, regardless of how long they've been in the House, share that particular goal. I've had the opportunity to observe and be part of a number of gov-

ernments over the years. One of the things that has been consistent in each of those governments is a desire to improve safety on our roads. Sometimes the legislation and regulations brought forward have been controversial, sometimes they have not, but the goal has always been for each of the governments to improve safety on our highways and on our individual roads.

Again, I would like to thank all of those who made representations to the committee. But previous to that, we had a consultation with a number of groups particularly concerned with road safety. If I had the list, I would read them off to you. I don't have that list at the present time. Needless to say, they included enforcement people in the province—that is, Ontario Provincial Police and individual police services across the province of Ontario—and our various safety partners, as we call them—organizations dedicated and devoted to safety—and also some individuals.

Not all of the proposals that came forward as part of this legislation and regulatory framework will be found in the final legislation. That is, the legislation has been changed through amendments made both by the government and opposition in committee and commitments made as to the regulatory framework.

We had one portion of the regulatory framework which, I think, gathered a good deal of comment, particularly from those who represent rural areas and the northern part of the province of Ontario, much of which is rural, who indicated that—and this involved the number of passengers in a vehicle. At the present time, between 12 midnight and 5 a.m., there is a restriction on the number of young people who can be in the vehicle at that time.

There was a proposal that came forward from Rob and Jan Perry, parents who lost a son among five young people who were killed in a vehicle accident. There was no alcohol involved, but there were five young people in a vehicle. As a result, people in their part of the province—we talk about Meaford and Thornbury and places like that—were quite concerned. There were some resolutions that came in from local councils asking the province to take this action. The reaction in the Legislature to that part of the regulatory framework was largely negative. As a result, the government said that it would postpone looking at that aspect of it at this point in time, and I think the legislation began to move much more quickly. Certainly, the critics from the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, to a person, were critical of that aspect of the bill.

I felt bad when Jan Perry appeared before the committee again. From her point of view, she was justifiably very disappointed that that aspect of the legislation was not found there. But I think what members of the committee understood, and the government as well, is that there are many aspects of this legislation which militate in favour of much more responsible driving by people of all ages, but in particular new and young drivers, and that that would go in the direction of trying to avoid those tragic accidents which have happened with a number of young people in the vehicle.

I listened. There were pretty strong attacks on that portion of the legislation, and I noted they came from all sides of the House. For those of us who represent largely urban areas, the driving experience is different from your area, for instance, Mr. Speaker. Much of Essex county is rural, and the imposition on young drivers in your part of the province may be different from that in downtown Toronto, as an example. Nevertheless, we must know that these accidents happen all over the province, and many of them happen in rural areas.

The bill that has emerged, while I can't call it a consensus of the House, does represent and include the views of all members of the House in one way or another. That's the best way to deal with legislation, in my view. Not all of the wisdom resides on the government side, and not all of the wisdom resides in the four walls of this Legislature, which is why we invite public input by people.

There are other aspects of the legislation as well. I'm not going to necessarily get into the details of those, because the parliamentary assistant, as we call them in this House, Linda Jeffrey, I'm sure has a very compelling speech to make to the Legislature at this time. So I will turn the floor over to her.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: It's a hard act to follow when you're following the Minister of Transportation, but I'll do my best.

I rise in the House today to conclude the discussion on legislation that, if passed, would make Ontario safer for drivers and everyone who shares our province's roads.

As Mr. Bradley has pointed out, our past legislation has been effective. Because of our government's actions, our province has earned a reputation for having some of the safest roads in North America. With even more people and vehicles on our roads than ever before, Ontario has held on to this impressive road safety record for over a decade. This is a record that we will fight to maintain, and we will fight to improve upon this record.

Every day in this province, two people are killed and 10 more are injured in collisions on our roads. The majority of these deaths and injuries are preventable, and that's why we, as a government, must do more to protect the people of Ontario. That is exactly what this government intends to do.

The Road Safety Act is a comprehensive piece of proposed legislation. It's a piece of legislation that would prevent injuries and deaths by combatting some of the most dangerous and persistent driver behaviours on our roads today. Our proposed measures would better protect our young and novice drivers by better preparing them for dealing with the realities of today's driving environment.

First, we plan to give young and novice drivers more time to get the experience and the skills they need for a lifetime of safe driving. How are we going to do that? We believe we're going to do that by extending the time it takes to get a full licence from 24 months to 36 months. For those novice drivers who pass a ministry-approved beginner driver education course, we will provide them

with a possible time discount of six months. Once in place, these changes will complement recent improvements to our beginner driver education program, changes that have raised educational standards for novice drivers enrolled in ministry-approved courses.

0930

Next, novice drivers who choose to ignore the rules of the road would face escalating sanctions for repeat violations of any of the conditions of the graduated licensing system. These escalating sanctions would also apply to any novice driver convicted of other offences under the Highway Traffic Act, where the driver receives four demerit points or court-ordered suspensions.

Escalating sanctions mean a driver would face penalties that get tougher with each serious violation of our province's traffic laws. For example, for a first violation, a young driver would face a 30-day driver's licence suspension. A second violation would result in a 90-day suspension. Upon their third conviction, the driver would return to the start of the graduated licensing program.

As all members in this House are aware, drinking and driving continues to be a major problem on our roads. Youth are particularly at risk. Research shows that the peak ages for drinking and driving collisions are 19, 20 and 21 years of age. That's why we are proposing that all drivers aged 21 years and under have a zero blood-alcohol concentration when they are behind the wheel.

If passed, Ontario would join several countries with similar restrictions in place, such as Australia and the United States. In fact, as the minister spoke about earlier, in the US this law has been cited as one of the single most important reasons for a drop in young driver collisions. But with more than a quarter of all collisions involving alcohol, we know that drinking and driving is a much larger challenge.

Police are asking for more effective tools to deal with drunk drivers and to get them off our roads. That's why we're proposing tough new measures that would mean anyone caught drinking and driving or driving without an ignition interlock device when one is required would face an immediate impoundment of their vehicle for seven days. The same would go for those who continue to drive while their licence is suspended.

To combat other dangerous driving behaviours, we have proposed provisions that would mean tougher, more appropriate fines and penalties for some of the most serious Highway Traffic Act offences. For example, the maximum fines for careless driving, not wearing a seat belt, failing to stop at a red light and failing to remain at the scene of a collision would double. Drivers who fail to stop for an emergency vehicle or follow too closely would also face stiffer fines and tougher sanctions. We believe that higher fines are more appropriate, given the risk to those who engage in those dangerous behaviours and the danger that they pose to other drivers.

We're doing more to protect our youngest and our most vulnerable passengers—our children. Under the Road Safety Act, the proposed measures would strengthen our requirements for the use of child safety seats in

motor vehicles. This also includes increased fines for caregivers who fail to ensure that their young passengers are safely secured in a seat belt or a child safety seat. Ontario students will also be better protected with updated safety standards for our school buses.

Our government has taken the issue of road safety very seriously. We're giving our police services better tools to help keep us safe. We're providing new drivers with the time they need to develop better skills that will give them the confidence and the abilities they need to stay safe for the many years to come. We're also getting tougher with drivers who continue to drink and drive. We're taking the right steps to keep our young passengers safe. We've taken new approaches to overcome many of our road safety challenges. Our actions over the years demonstrate our purpose. To save more lives on the road, we must change our laws and we must educate drivers and passengers on the consequences of disobeying the rules of the road and the laws that keep all road users safe.

This is something we can't do alone. In fact, we've received some very thoughtful comments and advice over the past months from those who attended the standing committee. I'd like to thank the many organizations and individuals who stepped forward to provide their suggestions, their comments and support on our proposed legislation and the many changes we are proposing to improve the safety of our roads.

Some of those individuals I'd like to thank this morning are Eleanor McMahon, Jan Perry and Tim Mulcahy, who overcame personal tragedy and unimaginable grief to stand up and fight for the changes they believe will make our roads safer for young drivers and others;

As well, I would like to thank:

—Anne Leonard and the members of the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, a critical partner in educating drivers and promoting road safety across the province;

—Andy Murie and the volunteers at MADD Canada, who seek out new and innovative ways to counter impaired driving on a daily basis;

—Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving, for providing us with an invaluable youth perspective on both the graduated licensing system and the zero-blood-alcohol-concentration initiatives;

—the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, whose research on young drivers was instrumental in the development of the graduated licensing system proposals;

—the Driving School Association of Ontario, whose members include many of the province's most knowledgeable driver education experts;

—the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the OPP, as well as municipal police officers that serve on the front lines and perform the vital task of enforcing our road safety laws each and every day.

I would like to thank Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ontario Traffic Conference, the Student Life Education Company and the students from the Robert Bateman

High School. The individuals that came from the Robert Bateman High School, a group of three young students, were eloquent and thoughtful in their presentation. I and the minister were very impressed with the content and the depth of the work and research that they provided to the committee. They were very helpful.

I would like to thank:

—the Motor Vehicle Crash Prevention Committee of Grey-Bruce, which provided a rural perspective on the need for improvements to the graduated licensing system;

—Doug Switzer from the Ontario Trucking Association and Karen Renkema from the Ontario Road Builders' Association, who were both very helpful in explaining the challenges that impoundment of a commercial vehicle has on industry and its clients;

—the Toronto Cyclists Union and all the individuals who spoke passionately about electric bicycles;

—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, for their comments regarding the amendments to the graduated licensing regulation; and

—all the stakeholders and people across Ontario who took the time, before our committee or in written form, to give their ideas and their consideration on this bill.

It's vital that we communicate with our stakeholders. We did; we consulted with them. So my sincere thanks to all the groups and to the members of all three parties for their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to road safety. Every contribution was greatly appreciated and each one received careful consideration. Our proposed Road Safety Act is a name befitting its goal. By working together we can prevent injuries and death, and reduce number of collisions on our roads. Together, we hope to reach our goal of having the safest roads in the world, and we can keep Ontario's roads safe and protect the lives of our loved ones. I would encourage all members of this House to support this legislation and I thank them for their time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: A pleasure to listen to the minister and parliamentary assistant this morning on—basically I think we're only dealing with Bill 126, the Road Safety Act. But he did make some brief mention of Bill 118, which is the technology part of the—I'm not sure if that bill is on the table here; they were both discussed in the same committee, which was kind of unusual. They're both ministry bills, but one is dealing with the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit use of devices and display screens and hand-held communication.

0940

I certainly agree with most of the comments the minister and the parliamentary assistant said. First, the parliamentary assistant did work hard. She sort of did the minister's bidding, the hard work, if you will, the confrontation that's there in not voting for our amendments and things like that, leading the pack against reasonable requests on the part of the opposition. At the end of the day, we do agree with the goal. The ultimate goal is to have the safest roads in Ontario.

In fact, Ontario is known to be a leader. If you look to the history, you know that Ontario was the first jurisdiction to bring in the graduated licence in April 1994, and other provinces followed the lead. So whenever you're ahead of the curve, like Ontario often is, you've got to look to the wise advice of the stakeholders and the ministry staff, who are the guardians of the policy, if you will, and you'd better have good reason to change the policies or play around with them.

In the case of the technology piece, Bill 118, I think we're also learning from other jurisdictions that have moved forward with some of the legislation on that. I think there were some additional improvements to the current state of all these gadgets in front of the driver. So it's important to stay ahead of that as well, as we start to have more and more distractions both in the car and on the road.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege to stand in this place and speak on behalf of constituents. In this case, I just want to pay homage to the 100,000 young people who started a Facebook group and really showed this province and the Minister of Transportation what grassroots organizing, real democracy and a real democratic voice look like. These are students. We often, in this place, decry the fact that our young people are not more involved in the political process. Here was one of those glaring examples of how untrue that is.

Here was a group, using the technology at their disposal, who organized, who spoke loudly with one voice and who actually changed the mind of a cabinet minister on the fly. This is amazing. It's happened very few times since I've been in this House that this has come to pass, and this is one of those times. I just want to say to all those Facebook users, all those young people, that you should be extremely proud of what you accomplished. Please don't stop there.

In an era where this place is becoming, it seems, increasingly irrelevant to the lives of Ontarians, here is a case where you made a difference. So make more of a difference. Keep your voice coming. Keep organizing. Don't stop where perhaps your own self-interest stops, but keep going and keep pushing for all of those things that make for a better Ontario. Use the technology at your disposal. Talking about technology—the member for Durham mentioned it—Facebook, this incredible technology that's now available to everyone, is virtually free and young people use it. So it's a great organizing tool. They've proven it with the results of the changes to this bill, and they've proved their own efficacy in terms of the democratic process in terms of changing a cabinet minister's mind. So kudos to the 100,000.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly enjoyed the remarks this morning by the Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton–Springdale.

I'll just get a quick plug in for the Montreal Canadiens. The coach and general manager is Bob Gainey from Peterborough—his mother still lives on Mark Street—so we know that they're going to make the playoffs.

But getting back to Bill 126, last Friday, I had the opportunity to be at the grade 10 class at St. Peter's high school in Peterborough. Linda Gendron is a teacher and Kathy Ross is the principal. One of the issues they raised on that particular day was the whole aspect relating to Bill 126 and the changes that were brought in. It's interesting to note that about half the students at St. Peter's high school would be from the rural part of Peterborough riding. They came together in common cause to make what I consider very reasonable arguments to the Minister of Transportation of the province of Ontario, to the parliamentary assistant and, indeed, to all members of this House. So you can always tell when a piece of government legislation has hit the right spot: when all parties, including our friend the independent member, come together in unison to improve a piece of legislation.

To really highlight that point, usually when a bill is particularly contentious, hearings are staged across the province of Ontario to make sure that we get input from a whole variety of sources. It's interesting that public hearings were originally scheduled in Niagara Falls, Goderich, Sudbury and Kingston, and they were all cancelled due to lack of presenters. What that means to me is that this House got it right, the Minister of Transportation got it right and the parliamentary assistant got it right. Indeed, all members in this House had an opportunity to provide input to this bill and get it exactly where we want to improve road safety for all of us in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to use the time available to make a couple of comments with regard to Bill 126. I think that when you look at something like this, you should always be looking at lessons learned. While the minister rightly talked about the record of Ontario in terms of road safety, this bill builds on the initiatives that people have taken over the last 10 years in making the roads safer. I look back, as a former parliamentary assistant in transportation, to the initiatives with regard to roadside suspensions, the 90-day impoundment of a vehicle and the ignition interlock: all things designed to make the roads safer, particularly in the constant battle we have with impaired drivers.

I think this bill sort of stands in that tradition, but it also demonstrates the lack of understanding on the part of the government in hasty decisions on things such as the number of young people in a car. I think that one of the other speakers referred to the fact that young people were able to find a voice, come together and recognize how important it is. I thought back, as the parent of a young person at the time, when our daughter was in university. She practically had a route to pick up all the people who would be going back to Kingston with her. It's important

to look carefully before you make those legislative changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate all the members who have offered their comments.

In regard to the input on it, the parliamentary assistant mentioned a number of organizations, groups and individuals who had input. I think that's exceedingly important, because it improves the bill.

I say to the member for York Simcoe that I guess my take on it is that until the legislation is completely passed in the Legislature, it is not law, and therefore governments can propose legislation that may be changed as a result of debate and input. I think we've seen some of that in this case, and I think it's positive about the parliamentary system in which we live at the present time that members of all parties in the House have that influence.

I encourage young people as well to become involved in a number of issues, as the member for Parkdale-High Park said, not only those that directly impact the privileges of young people but a number of different issues. I think that can be helpful, and we are delighted to see that kind of input. I note that with one provision removed, which would have been regulatory and not in the bill itself, there was general support for the legislation after that.

I know that the member for Peterborough understands the importance of education, of young people being educated in these matters and knowing what the laws are and what the consequences are. Very often when you talk to young people, one of the things they complain about is what they consider to be discrimination by insurance companies against them. Insurance companies, and I think others, will tell them that the reason is that the record among people of a certain age is not as good as it is when they get older. Nevertheless, throughout our lifetime we can all improve our driving habits. This provides a basis for doing so, and I look forward to further input from members of the Legislature in this debate and beyond.

0950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess I'm going to sort of stick very close to the script. I first want to respect the work that our critic, Frank Klees, had done on this bill, along with the minister. Frank Klees, as you know, is running for the leadership of the party at the moment and, as such, had to relinquish his privilege or duty to be the critic for transportation. He had full carriage of this and most of the amendments. Now, I'm not unfamiliar with it; anyone in the Legislature would have a certain amount of comfort with the discussion that was held during the debate and would know full well that there were controversial sections, especially under the graduated licence portion. That was probably where most of the controversy arose.

I'm going to give a bit of context, only because I'm new to it—I have done a bit of looking into it. I'm just

going to read here the notes that were provided to me. This is the background of the genesis of this bill. It's important to recognize—often you try to find something positive from tragedies, and that's what I think this bill is about.

In July of I believe 2008, but it could have been 2007, “three young Toronto men were killed when, after an afternoon of drinking at a lakeside club, their speeding sports car crashed through a guardrail into a river in Muskoka. A female friend, who kicked free of the submerged car, was the only survivor.

“Soon afterward, the father of the 20-year-old driver began a campaign—full-page newspaper ads ... in large type to the Premier entitled, ‘Dear Mr. McGuinty, My Son is Dead’—for tougher restrictions on young drivers.

“There was a meeting between the two men”—I gather that's the Premier and Mr. Mulcahy—“in September. There was a personal phone call from the Premier last week to inform the father the legislation introduced yesterday” by Minister Bradley “was coming.” This was published in the *Toronto Star* on November 19, 2008.

“At least 115,000 people have joined a Facebook group lobbying against the proposed new driving laws in Ontario that target teens and inexperienced drivers.

“Tim Mulcahy's personal website, www.timmulcahy.net/, boasts in a November 13, 2008, posting that the ‘law change’ lobby group he organized after his son's death had collected 6,400 names on their law change petition.

“Legions of upset young drivers took to the web to voice their displeasure as Facebook groups popped up after first reading. The largest group, created by Hamilton resident Jordan Sterling on November 18, has more than 115,000 names and is spreading across the social networking site like wildfire,” reported the *Niagara Falls Review* on November 22, 2008.

“At the November 17 announcement the CEO of MADD Canada remarked that Ontario Ministry of Transportation officials had been in discussions with the organization for months about changes to graduated licences.” In fact, as I said earlier, graduated licences started in 1994, and I guess there's always a review of the licensing, driver's ed—all these things. Even the auditor has commented on these things—but I continue from this article.

“Young Drivers of Canada president Peter Christianson was called upon by the Ministry of Transportation in 2008 as part of a stakeholder group asked to lend their industry experience and comment on the parameters of graduated licensing. With over 40 years in the driver training industry, Peter Christianson was present at a number of these meetings set to evaluate where changes could be made to make Ontario a safer place to drive.”

Basically, that's a bit of the background. Our initial response to this was that really, we were unable to support the bill as it was initially drafted unless appropriate amendments could be made with regard to the number of passengers allowed in the vehicle—I think that's been marginally addressed here, but it has not been changed—

the speeding provisions and replacing the reference to age with reference to the experience level of drivers. I think that's important too, because new drivers, whether they're new Canadians who are just getting a licence—it's always wrong to suppose that all new drivers are young people. Many new drivers are people who just haven't had a licence, so it would be wrong to characterize. All young drivers are not bad drivers. That's important to clarify.

I'd like to put on a message here that I live in a riding, Durham, where about 70% of the area is rural. It has no transit, yet there are many diverse communities, farms, small villages and hamlets, and many of the young people go to high school or participate in 4-H and other organizations for entertainment, as well as positive youth engagement groups, whether it's Cubs, Scouts, Guides, Pathfinders or whatever. All these young people are very concerned about how they will get around with the restriction on the number of persons.

I can see the restrictions on drivers on the 400 series highways, and I also agree full-heartedly with zero blood alcohol for young drivers—and I mean new drivers. I think that's very important, because as we operate things in a lot faster mode these days, all of your attention and faculties should be at your disposal to deal with the conditions on the roads, as well as the other drivers on the roads.

I think the bill and the whole genesis of it is—nothing is perfect, as the minister said in his remarks. This bill goes a long way to at least recognizing that we need to work together to make the roads safer and have appropriate laws.

In the interest of using as much time as possible, I will go into—I had to laugh yesterday. I stood to speak on a bill and it turned out I had already spoken on the bill, so I couldn't stand again. They ordered me that I couldn't speak.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Haven't you spoken on this before?

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the third reading on the bill, so it is a different time. The minister is in good spirits today, which is good, too.

I'll go to the part that's a little bit cynical, but it must be said. If I look at the bill, there's a whole section here on increased fines. I think it is part of the duty of the opposition to point out that these are challenging economic times. We have great consternation about the job losses in the province, the imposition of the new HST, and the health tax. I see in here there's another section on increased fines. The fines in this section that I'm referring to are for not complying with the act or regulations respecting seat belts under section 106; they have increased from \$60 to \$500. My advice to avoid this \$500 fine is to buckle up. The evidence is there, and this is another way of getting the hammer out to get you to pay attention, to get you to wear the seat belt. Under section 214, the fine has increased from \$200 to \$1,000. My advice to avoid the problem is to buckle up.

The fine for careless driving, in section 130 of the Highway Traffic Act, has increased from \$200 to \$1,000

to \$400 to \$2,000. We're starting to get into serious change here. Careless driving can be very prohibitive. Young people should be aware. It's not just the sort of humorous comments I'm making, but young people and careless driving—you are going to end up affecting the rest of your life, because your insurance will go up. Not only do you lose demerit points, your insurance goes up, and I suspect the ability to drive and get around to work and from work might be very much seriously impacted. Your insurance could be almost unaffordable; it could be as much as \$500 a month or something. It could be a lot. I would say that this fine here is one more thing.

The fine for not stopping at a red light is kind of interesting. Under sections 144 and 146 it has increased—currently it's \$150 to \$500—to up to \$1,000. We're talking serious change here. My advice to you to avoid these is to stop at all the red lights or stop signs; that's what they're there for. The fine for not complying with section 200, remaining or returning to the scene of an accident, has increased from \$200 to \$1,000 to \$400 to \$2,000. So those are some other measures here to make people compliant with the Highway Traffic Act.

1000

The speed racing in many of the portions of the bill, I have to say—it's good to be listening here, because Mr. Klees, when he was the Minister of Transportation, had some pretty good ideas, and probably a lot of them came from the stakeholder groups and probably a lot of them came from the ministry people. It's also good to see that the current minister does give credit, whether it's on the street racing issue or other issues, to moving forward. Doing the right thing is good policy. It's good politics, it's good policy, and they aren't unique to any one party. But when someone takes the time to listen to someone else, which I could improve on a bit myself, it would probably improve your overall performance in serving the people of Ontario.

So at the end of the day, this bill here is an important step forward, I guess. Nothing's perfect, and I would recommend that our caucus would probably be in support of it. That being said, I guess there are a couple of things that I wanted to put on the record that were brought to my attention in the past weekend.

I was at an event where the Lieutenant Governor was there and a lot of the local councillors were there. One of the younger councillors and his wife came up to me. They had written to me on this issue because they have young children and they live in Leaskdale, which is north of Uxbridge. They were concerned that their young son would be going to college and not be able to drive the car. I said, "Well, there are restrictions, but I think almost everyone else is putting up with it too. Is there someone else there going to school with"—can we accommodate the young people? That's the important point that I'm trying to make here. I think reasonableness is an important factor.

Young drivers after midnight is another point. It's likely that they are out for social reasons, but if it's work, there's another issue there that I think is important. I

don't want, as a parent—we had five children. We used to live in the country. When they were out working in their various jobs to pay for their university or whatever, and before in high school, we would often have to go and pick them up until they were driving. Then it was even more—we were up waiting to see that they got home safely. So there's always a concern by parents, as there should be.

The other part, this whole idea of drinking and driving: There's great pressure—we've dealt with smoking in cars. We've dealt with the government's role there. But drinking is something where we should resign ourselves to saying that we shouldn't drink and drive, period. That's the best measure there. When the minister said in his remarks that 25% of all accidents are alcohol-related, that's a wake-up call to say we shouldn't depend on the measurement of alcohol. It just affects some people worse than others, and some people think they can get away with it. How about zero? Zero's a good place. You won't get in any trouble there.

I think—the other part—it's important to address the fact that we would not want to characterize all young people as irresponsible. That's important, to get that message out there. We've got to treat them fairly and treat them positively and then also have consequences for those who break the rules. I think the bill goes a long way to achieving a reasonable balance.

With that, I'll probably relinquish my time in case anyone else wants to say anything. I see Mr. Yakubski's here, and if anybody—on Bill 126, a lot has been said. It's time to move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was a bit surprised. I was expecting the member to go on, because I know that he has a lot to say on this legislation. But I want to say up front that the member has shown a great interest in this particular legislation. As we know, transportation has always been one of the passions that he brings to this Legislature. So like my good friend Mr. Bradley, I want to congratulate him for the work that he's done and also to say that, yes, the legislation is an improvement on what was already put in place back, I guess, in 1993, when the first graduated driver's licence system was brought to Ontario. The minister was right when he made the comment that it was Gilles Pouliot who was the minister at the time.

I know there is some concern out there on the part of younger people, who in 1993, like now, didn't particularly like the idea of having to go through added steps in order to get a driver's licence because, fortunately or unfortunately, most people see a driver's licence as a right and not necessarily a responsibility. It's almost a rite of passage at the age of 16. Mr. Bradley was right: When we went through the process, it wasn't as rigid as it is now. He was making the comments that what was the toughest thing at the time was the 15-minute test. I thought what was tougher was coming up with the 25 bucks to do the actual test itself. But that was back in, I guess, the very early 1970s when I went through that the first time—or the only time, I guess.

So, yes, this is an improvement, and it brings us in the right direction. I think it deals with some of the concerns that are out there in regard to making sure we do everything humanly possible to prepare young people for safer driving. I know that the parents who did come before our committee, when the requirement was taken away in regard to what they had been advocating for, are still upset with the government over that. I hear their concerns.

As a parent, I can't even pretend to understand what these parents are going through. Losing a child has to be something that, God forbid, any of us ever have to go through. If somebody has, I don't know how you deal with that, and I'd probably be doing what they're doing.

Clearly, there was the fairly large evidence of people who came before us who wanted those amendments to the legislation. That's why the government moved that, and that's why we supported those amendments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for giving me an opportunity to respond to the member from Durham.

A lot has been debated in this chamber as to the impact of this legislation on young drivers. There is one aspect I wanted to highlight which is extremely positive, which I don't think has been spoken about at all, which is the regulation of power-assisted bicycles or e-bikes, which is also part and parcel of this legislation, by amending the Highway Traffic Act.

As we know, there is a pilot project going on in Ontario that ends in October which allows for e-bikes on regular streets with a bicycle helmet, proper reflectors etc., to encourage, of course, more energy-efficient ways of transportation.

I know that this particular pilot project has been very successful in Ottawa. A constituent of mine, Charles Jonas, has been very active in marketing these e-bikes in the community. Actually, his office is located in the building where my community office is located.

I'm happy to see that e-bikes or power-assisted bicycles are now defined under the definition "bicycle" through Bill 126, and that regulations will be made to make the pilot permanent in defining the parameters around the use of e-bicycles.

This goes hand in hand with the government's approach on electric motor vehicles as well, to encourage people to get away from cars which use gas and to use more energy-efficient or more environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

I'm very excited to see this aspect relating to e-bikes in this legislation, and I wholeheartedly support the approach of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not sure where everybody stands on this piece of legislation in this place today, but I'm against it. I think it was an overreaction on the part of a government to a terrible tragedy. Nothing we can do in this Legislature or anywhere else is going to turn back that clock.

I think some of the things that they have done have unfairly targeted young, responsible drivers. I know that most young people don't go out and vote, so the government feels they're probably okay in taking those measures. But this was the wrong approach, by making it harder and more difficult for our responsible young people to enjoy the same benefits as adults when it comes to driving privileges.

The graduated licence system has worked very, very well over the last number of years that it's been in place. But putting in additional restrictions simply on the basis of age—what about the qualifications of a driver?

When we talk about impaired driving—something that every person in this Legislature would like to see eliminated—the reality is that the people most likely to be driving impaired are people more like me, more my age, who grew up in a time when impaired driving was not quite so frowned upon. The young people today are so inundated with good information and good learning about the evils and the wrongness of impaired driving and dangerous driving, yet we, in this legislation, are targeting them because the government decided they were going to overreact to a terrible tragedy. That's not the way good laws are made, and I will vote against this one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for the comments. My comment on the member for Durham and his astute observations today, and his inclination to support the legislation: I'm delighted to hear that.

He mentioned something that I think is important for all of us to know, and that is that when you talk about input from various people in the province, the staff at the Ministry of Transportation does so much hard work in terms of helping to develop legislation, doing the consultation and so on. I join with him and all members of the Legislature in thanking them for the work that they do on legislation of this kind. I know from his comments that he may not have exactly the same viewpoint—that's what the Legislature is all about—of my friend from Barry's Bay.

What you will find in this legislation, as the member who spoke knows, is that many aspects of the legislation affect people of all ages. Yes, there are some parts of the bill that bring us in compliance with the 50 states in the United States, for instance, which now have zero-blood-alcohol content to the age of 21; all 50 states in the United States and some other jurisdictions around the world. It does bring us into compliance with that, and it's trying to develop those habits at an early age. I mentioned in my initial remarks that the statistics we have show that the worst age for drinking and driving is, in fact, 19 to 21, which is most unfortunate. The member was correct when he was commenting on the member for Durham's speech, in saying that all of us, of all ages, have to be sure that we are in compliance with the laws of the province.

But I thought the member for Durham summed up very well his observations. It really demonstrates that this is a bill of the Legislature, not simply of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a healthy discussion this morning. I want to thank the member from Timmins—James Bay in his role as the NDP critic—he does a great and thoughtful job—as well as the younger member from Ottawa Centre, and partly my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who has expressed a concern that certainly is there; he's expressed that. And for the Minister of Transportation to so diligently attend here today, that's very good.

Again, at the end of the day this bill will pass, and at the end of the day our remarks have been made by Mr. Klees in his role as critic. Certainly, I've tried to respect his views on the bill, both during the committee hearings for the day I was there as well as the comments this morning. So with that, thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning on this bill. I look forward to moving forward.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman: I hope that all members might join with me in welcoming a group from George Brown College, led by Jim Cooper. This group is the For You program. We welcome them to the Ontario Legislature today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the MPP from Algoma—Manitoulin and page Michael Niven, we'd like to welcome, in the east public gallery, his mother, Heather, his cousin Chris Ramsey and his cousin Richard Hyem to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the Minister of Health Promotion and page Megan Wood, in the east members' gallery, Susan Wood, her mother. Welcome today.

On behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and page Mark Ang, his father, Winston Ang, and Jacqueline Ang, his stepmother, in the east members' gallery. Welcome today.

As well, we'd like, on behalf of the member from Welland, to welcome Julius Behul, the editor-in-chief of The Canadian Slovak newspaper, in the west gallery. Welcome today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce a big contingent from SEIU Local 1, who are in the west gallery with us today. They're easy to identify with their brand new shirts.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. It has to do with your budget, your seeming lack

of appreciation of the struggles that many Ontarians are facing today, especially those on a fixed income. You should know that retirement investments that many seniors and others depend on to put food on their tables, to pay their bills, have lost significant value over the past 12 months. This recession is hurting many people, many families, but especially those on fixed incomes. In this province, seniors account for close to 15% of the population, a vital role in all of our communities. Premier, given the state of the economy, the challenges families are facing, why would you bring in a budget that imposes an even heavier tax burden on seniors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, seniors this year and next year will benefit from very substantial reductions in their personal taxes and in their property taxes. I'll remind the member opposite that we've extended the property tax credit for seniors and raised it. That will come into effect this year, some \$600.

It's those kinds of initiatives that we believe are the appropriate initiatives to help our seniors, as we're working to help all Ontarians through these challenging times. Like so many Ontarians, we're confident that these measures are the right measures for the times, will see Ontario through these difficult circumstances, help our seniors through these difficult circumstances, and when we get through this—and we will get through this—Ontario will be bigger, better and stronger.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's very telling that the Premier declined to respond to the question. I've said it before and I'll say it again: The Premier is living in a very comfortable, taxpayer-subsidized bubble and clearly doesn't appreciate the impact his tax grab is having on Ontario's families who are struggling, especially seniors.

Wernham Wealth Management, in London, Ontario, has done an analysis of the impact your budget will have on seniors across Ontario. They've concluded, "We have calculated that the impact on this Liberal budget will be more costly for Ontario seniors than anyone has reported." Minister, it's not just the opposition saying your budget is a tax grab. Now we have a respected investment counselling firm saying it.

Minister, I ask you—I asked the Premier earlier; he refused to answer—why in the midst of a recession would you impose an even heavier tax burden on Ontario's seniors?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have to categorically disagree with the findings of that report. It's absolutely—I categorically disagree.

Let me remind the member of some other initiatives we undertook. We are creating 4,500 new affordable housing units for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities. The other thing we did is that we are increasing the unlocking permission of Ontario life income funds, LIFs, from 25% to 50%, and we are the only government, sir, that is removing the fees for that over the next two years.

There is always more to do, there are always challenges in the economy. But this government and this

Premier have put the interests of all Ontarians first by bringing forward a budget that will create jobs in the short term and move us to the growth we need in the long term that will make this province a better place for all Ontarians to live.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We'll get a copy of the report for the minister so he can appreciate the real impact.

In the analysis, Wernham used the example of a typical retired couple receiving an after-tax income of \$41,400 a year. They looked at a limited number of items they would use on a daily basis, items that with your new 8% tax will cost more without the couple getting more, and compared it to the tax relief you have continually boasted about. Their conclusion: The net increased tax hit on this couple will be at least \$1,561 a year.

Again, minister, can you understand the increased hardship you're imposing on limited- or fixed-income seniors with a significant tax increase in the midst of a recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, the leader has not talked about the property tax credit, which he has voted against. They've not talked about the personal income taxes, which that member and his party just yesterday voted against. He has not talked about the unlocking provision, which that member and his party voted against. He has not talked about the seniors' housing—let me tell you what Donna Rubin, the CEO of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, says: "Capacity in the health, housing and community sectors is a very serious challenge and we have high praise for steps such as these to strengthen the overall system and expand the range and availability of services. These initiatives will go a long way to ensuring that seniors receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time." That member and his party cut those services; that member and his party voted against every one of these initiatives in the budget. This Premier and his government have the interests of all Ontarians, particularly seniors, at heart, and that's why—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier, responding to apparently the leader of his own party, because he signs deals behind the backs of his own caucus: Premier, Ontarians have rightly continued to voice their very legitimate concerns about this Premier and his Minister of Finance, who continue to break promises and raise taxes. In the latest irony, Energy Star appliances are on the list of new items to be taxed when the Premier's new "tax on everything I can" plan takes effect. I want to illustrate the irony for the folks across the aisle. The Liberals want people to buy products to save energy, but now the Premier says he plans to tax them. Premier, how

can you not see that your new taxes on Ontarians are actually flying in the face of previous pledges?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It is true that we have to make some changes with respect to taxes. Unlike my honourable colleague, who believes that the world has not changed, who believes that we need do nothing differently—notwithstanding the fact that Ontario is being beaten up by this global economic meltdown and we're losing far too many jobs, he would have us do nothing. We believe that we have to do something. We've talked to business in particular; they've told us the single most important thing that we can do to strengthen our business sector so that we can create more jobs and generate more wealth to support good schools and good health care, strong supports for our vulnerable and better protect our environment is to move ahead with a single sales tax. They have done it in 130 other countries; they've done it in four provinces. I'm not saying it is an easy thing to do. My friend would have us hang on to the past; we're not going back there. We're building a better, brighter, more promising future for the people of Ontario. We're asking them to support us as we do this.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't know about you, Speaker, but I didn't hear an answer to my specific question. The irony of what they're doing here—it's just a lot of hot air, as usual, from this Premier.

We know the Minister of Finance was stepping out on the Premier into someone else's kitchen, cooking up the latest massive tax grab behind the backs of his own caucus. We also know this was happening at the same time the Premier was supposedly reassuring his concerned caucus members that he wouldn't be crazy enough to launch another tax grab missile on them.

Premier, you're now adding massive taxes to energy-efficient products. You're also planning to increase the cost of electricity by as much as \$840 per consumer, forcing a mandatory \$300 cost for a home energy audit. Obviously, you haven't consulted with your caucus, but have you even consulted with Minister Smitherman, Minister Gerretsen and Minister Duncan? Because your ministers are showing inconsistencies all over your policies. Have you even talked to them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is a difficult time for the people of Ontario, but I just don't think it helps to pander in fear. I think people are looking for reasons to be hopeful; they're looking for reasons to know that we understand where a bright future is, and we're prepared to take the measures necessary today to guarantee that bright future for all of us.

You know, my honourable colleague talked a moment ago about seniors and the consequences of some of these changes on them. Of course, he ignored the tax reductions and the property tax credit and those kinds of things. But one of the things that I've heard when I've talked to grandparents, for example—they said to me, "What can we do together to ensure there are more jobs available for my grandchildren?" That's what they're talking about.

We are prepared to do what is necessary, and we will move ahead with these tax reforms in a way that provides the maximum possible protections to all our families, including our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: He didn't talk about the debt he shouldered our grandchildren with.

I want to quote the Minister of Finance when he was in opposition: "Did your government consult any of your 'backbenchers? You should be ashamed. This document's the ruin of Ontario." He said that in 1995. Despite his dire words, this province came a long way until this Premier took the reigns of Ontario's treasury, putting Ontario into a have-not status and record deficits.

Premier, both the member from Peterborough and the member from Guelph-Wellington have been speaking from both sides of their mouths on this newest scheme for taxing Ontarians on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw.

They've been contradictory—hopefully that will be parliamentary—on this scheme to tax Ontarians on gasoline, haircuts and funerals. Clearly, Premier, you didn't consult with them. Were they forced by you and your finance minister to swallow their pride and approve of your massive tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to know that my honourable colleague has become an ombudsman for people in my caucus. But I want to thank my caucus for the wisdom that they injected into this budget and for the decisions that we've agreed to take as a government.

I believe that Ontarians know that this is a difficult period for us. In fact, it's the most difficult economic crisis we've had to cope with in some 80 years. You know, just as the world has changed, we too have to make some changes, and we're making a change that I'm not pretending is easy to make. We're going to reform our tax system, but we're going to do it in a way that provides maximum protection for our families.

The overwhelming majority of Ontarians are going to get a tax cut. We're increasing the Ontario child benefit, we're increasing the minimum wage, we're building new affordable housing, and we're making pretty dramatic new increases in funding for health care, education and post-secondary education. We are building the future. We're going to have better jobs for more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty government says that its 25% domestic content rule is good enough in purchasing transit vehicles in Ontario. Dominic has worked at the Thunder Bay Bombardier plant for 22 years, first as an assembler and now as a machinist. He knows that the 25% domestic vehicle content rule will not ensure that transit vehicles

are, in fact, made in Ontario by Ontario workers. New Democrats want a 50% Ontario transit vehicle content rule. Tell me, why are the McGuinty Liberals letting down workers like Dominic and thousands of others?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much. That the member who opposed the subway in Toronto as a public transit project that would have created a lot of jobs, not only constructionwise but otherwise, would ask this question is rather interesting in itself. I can tell him that some good fellow New Democrats who sit on Toronto city council believe that the 25% content rule is reasonable. They, as with the provincial government, have done extensive consultation with a variety of people out there to determine what policy would be best, including with those who are users and those who are making products. You also know, of course, that 82% of the work done in the province of Ontario on our greater Toronto projects will in fact be by Ontario people.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, the McGuinty Liberals try to confuse the issue. The 82% takes into account construction. We're not talking about construction here. We're talking about the manufacture of transit vehicles.

I want to remind members of the McGuinty Liberals that just a week ago, President Obama sent his Vice-President to a bus plant in St. Cloud, Minnesota. He was there to recognize all of the jobs that are created and sustained because of the Buy America policy—the Buy America policy that provides that the bus shells may be made in Winnipeg, but the finished product has to be made in the United States, which means thousands of jobs for machinists, for welders, for instrument mechanics and for air conditioning mechanics. If that is the content rule in the United States—at least 50% American content—why can't Ontario do the same thing?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, I can tell the member that those workers who reside and work in Thunder Bay make an excellent-quality product. I have every confidence that they will be able to compete for the contracts that are put forward.

I could say in one area—I could play a game with you. For instance, there's one particular product—I think the double-decker train cars are made in Thunder Bay. It's the only place they are made. So I could say, well, that should be 95% Canadian content in that, and it would look good. Others are not. There are no products that are made in Canada in specific areas. So overall we look at it and we say that we are in very good shape. I'm very confident that we will see the people in Thunder Bay do very well in these contracts with the 25% rule that the city of Toronto and province of Ontario have.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't know what products the McGuinty government is referring to. Are they saying buses aren't made in Canada? Streetcars aren't made in Canada? Subway cars aren't made in Canada? GO train cars aren't made in Canada? They're all made in Canada, and what we are asking for is a domestic content rule. That's what Dominic wants to see.

But it goes beyond transit gear. We know, for example, that Quebec has a 60% content rule on all new green energy projects, which means that wind turbines are being manufactured in Quebec and solar electricity components are being manufactured in Quebec. Why will the McGuinty government not agree to a 60% domestic content rule when it comes to green energy projects and the products that will have to be used in green energy projects?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm very, very happy to have this question again from the honourable member and to remind him that the legislation which is presently before committee, Bill 150, actually has the capacity that allows us to establish those. We've been clear in saying that we want to do that.

I was in Hamilton yesterday. I know that's a community where there is a tremendous interest in making sure that, as we go forward and bring more renewable energy projects to life, as we have more wind turbines, they stand aloft on towers that were actually constructed from steel here in the province of Ontario. We have the same motivation. That's why, working with the sector, we'll be able to move forward and to improve the domestic content in renewable energy projects as we move forward to more installation here in the province of Ontario. That's why I encourage the support of the honourable member and his party for Bill 150.

1050

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier suggested that new homes under \$400,000 will receive an exemption from his government's HST. That simply is not correct and the Premier knows it. In fact, families buying new homes under \$400,000 will be hit with a 2% tax. That's \$7,000 more on a \$350,000 new home. Why won't the Premier admit that he's slapping a 2% tax on moderately priced new homes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: With the new homeowner credit, it will be a complete break-even for persons buying homes under \$400,000.

As the Premier said in his previous answer, we have taken some steps that we realize are challenging, but they are the right steps. The reason we are cutting personal taxes is to help Ontarians move through these challenging times and have more disposable income available to them to buy homes, to buy cars, to buy the kinds of goods and services that will help get this economy moving again. It is about creating those long-term jobs, providing more jobs for our people to ensure that this economy gets back to a level of growth that will support those vital public services—public health care and public education—and yes, have the ability to help the most vulnerable in our society. That's what this budget's about, that's what it's going to deliver and that's why

we're confident that we have a bright future once we get through these very challenging times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Because he knows only full well that in order for those houses to cost the same amount, there has to be a price reduction by the builders themselves.

It's expensive to own a home in Ontario, especially in the GTA and Ottawa. The recession has devastated people's savings and has them worried about their own jobs. When people are already less able to afford a new home, what does this Premier do? He slaps a tax on new home purchases. Why is the Premier hiking taxes on new homes? Because you are.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member knows full well that that 2% has always been there. He knows that full well, and he also knows that that \$400,000 covers 75% of new home sales in Ontario. He also knows this does not apply to resale homes, which are the vast majority. He also knows that when you move that sliding scale up to \$500,000, an even bigger proportion of new homes is covered here and across Ontario.

We are taking these challenging moves to ensure that Ontario gets back to a level of growth that will allow us to make investments in public health care and public education. Unlike his party, which has advocated and continues, apparently, to advocate an increase in the provincial sales tax, we have taken a broad approach that lowers taxes for 93% of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: The Minister of Finance continues to make things up. The McGuinty government's new tax on new homes is bad news for a sector that supports 360,000 direct jobs in the GTA alone. Last month, Ontario lost 28,000 construction jobs.

When families consider buying a new home, they're going to see a \$7,000 tax on a \$350,000 home, and a \$40,000 tax on a \$500,000 home. How is hiking taxes on new homes going to help Ontario families and our construction sector?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Those numbers are absolutely incorrect and don't take into account the new home sales tax credit.

You know, I don't make those things up. Here's the letter signed by Howard Hampton. He's sitting right over there.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: What does it say?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It says—and let me read this to you: "The federal government has given the McGuinty government a revenue-neutral" approach plus "\$2 billion in revenue through to Ontario.... If Mr. McGuinty takes action now and follows his own advice, the PST can fill the 1% tax room vacated by the GST."

They called very clearly, and very recently, since the last election, to raise the provincial sales tax. You were very wrong about that. I hope the member opposite won't continue to vote against the low-income tax cuts, and I

hope he won't vote against the \$5.2 billion in our poverty agenda to help the most vulnerable in Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. In addition to seniors, your tax grab is going to hit another group of Ontarians who can't afford it—some of the over 300,000 people who have lost their jobs in the McQuinty Ontario. The newspapers they need for want ads will be up 8%. The Internet service they need to look for a job online will increase 8%. Seminars and conferences on new careers—same thing. Even the stamps to mail their applications will be going up 8%. Premier, do you think it's fair to hit these people who are already struggling with these increased taxes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the member opposite wants to ignore a number of facts. He wants to ignore the fact that we have an 18% cut in small business taxes, which is designed specifically to hire more people. He wants to avoid talking about the corporate tax cut which, the day before the budget, he supported and now, the day after, he's voting against. We're taking the general commercial rate from 14% to 10% and the manufacturing and processing rate from 12% to 10%. By the way, that's manufacturers, farmers and processors. And he's ignoring the \$10.6-billion personal tax cut.

This budget package, as has been indicated by a range of organizations and newspapers—the Toronto Star, the National Post and the Globe and Mail have all talked about the benefit of this budget in creating jobs today, more than 300,000 in infrastructure jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would point out that the 300,000 the Minister of Finance wants to talk about, in fact, are 300,000 people who have lost their jobs who will not benefit from one of those items that the minister across the aisle would talk about.

The people of Ontario are struggling to find jobs so they can make their mortgage payments and put food on their table. Under Premier McGuinty's tax grab, if they are lucky enough to actually get a job interview, they're going to be hit with even more taxes: 8% more for a haircut and dry cleaning and—get ready—8% more for gas to get there, 8% more for a taxi or a train if they need to go there.

Premier, will you admit that this is the wrong time and that your tax grab is penalizing the very people who need your help the most in this recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our package is a tax cut; 93% of Ontarians will pay lower taxes. In the first four years, the government of Ontario will seek 2.6 billion fewer dollars. The \$4.3 billion from the federal government has enabled us to move on these broad tax measures.

I would remind the member opposite that, as you stand up today and criticize us, there's a new hospital being built in your riding. Mr. Hudak, the fellow who sits right

in front of you, said we shouldn't be spending that kind of money on infrastructure. We disagree with that. We've put together a tax package that will create jobs, assist this economy through the challenging times and, unlike the member and his party, we want to build new hospitals, we want to build new schools and make those investments in infrastructure and jobs that are essential to get this province through difficult times.

EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Parents are concerned about the Ministry of Education school finder website. The website institutionalizes school shopping in Ontario, a practice that is very prevalent in the United States. It encourages school discrimination based on ethnicity and income, and it's absolutely appalling.

Minister Wynne said she wants to adjust the website based on parental concerns, but the Premier says there is nothing wrong with posting information on family income and immigration. Who, exactly, is in charge of the education file for this government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The answer is that the Premier and I agree completely that the information that's on the website is important. We have had very positive feedback from parents who want this information, particularly from newcomer parents who are looking for information about local schools.

The reality is the website is staying up. The information is staying on the website. We have removed the comparison engine to have a broader conversation with stakeholders, parents, members of the community. We will have that conversation, and we will continue to provide the information that community members and parents are looking for.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The government should not be in the business of promoting school-shopping, and that's what this website does. New Democrats find the collection and distribution of data related to income, immigration levels and special education students at schools reprehensible. Yesterday, Minister Wynne seemed to be listening and seemed prepared to make changes, but the Premier doesn't agree with the minister and he sees nothing wrong with leaving the website as is. We get no positive feedback from this; I don't know where you are getting your information, Minister.

Will you change the online information or will you maintain this detestable website as it is?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite obviously doesn't trust parents with information. We do trust parents with information. The fact is that there is information available on the C.D. Howe Institute website and on the Fraser Institute website. Those are organiz-

ations that rank schools. They rank schools; that's not what we're doing.

The member opposite has been a school trustee. He knows full well that people make decisions based on rumour, based on innuendo. What we're trying to do is provide accurate, reliable information for people who are looking for it. That's what we will continue to do because we actually trust the ability of people in the public, of parents, to make decisions and to use the information in a responsible way.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. David Orazietti: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday you introduced Bill 167, the proposed Toxics Reduction Act.

The environmental benefits of this initiative are clear. Toxic substances are used in nearly all industrial and production activities and are found in the products that we use. I know that residents in my community have strong concerns about the presence of toxins in their everyday lives. They worry about toxins and carcinogens present in our environment and the impacts that they may have on our health, the health of our families and our environment. Ontarians have indicated that reducing toxins should be a government priority, and in fact over 90% of Ontarians put toxic substances on par with climate change as a key environmental issue.

Beyond the clear environmental and health benefits, we all know that the way ahead for our province lies in the development of the green economy. In Ontario, this requires business and industry to develop new practices in the context of environmental priorities. How does toxin reduction planning support our transformation to the green economy? How would our government support business and industry in making this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all compliment and congratulate this member for taking a leadership role on this issue. He's been very concerned about this ever since he's gotten here.

Our toxics reduction strategy will position our industries to compete and succeed in the emerging green economy. Through the proper planning, industries will find solutions to reduce toxics, the green chemistry solutions that we're all looking for.

From the experience of other jurisdictions, they have found that it increases their competitive advantage, and they will find new business opportunities through the commercialization of research, promoting new technologies and exploring safer alternatives. In addition to that, we will invest \$24 million to help Ontario industries comply with the new rules and regulations, transform their processes, find green chemistry alternatives and reduce the use of toxics in their operations. That's to the benefit not only of business but of all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Orazietti: Thank you, Minister. Yesterday in this House, you spoke of this strategy resulting in real reductions in toxics use.

However, I understand that implementing these plans is a voluntary process. I heard concerns that making implementation voluntary would mean that businesses wouldn't actually reduce their toxics use. Our goal should be to ensure that there is a reduction in the use of toxins to protect the health of our communities and the environment and that our businesses are leading the way with green chemistry solutions that will be the future of the new green economy.

How can we be assured that these plans will be substantive? What evidence do you have to show that toxics reduction planning will lead to implementation and real reduction in toxics use?

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is a major issue. The experience in other jurisdictions such as Massachusetts and New Jersey has clearly shown that mandatory planning and voluntary implementation result in real reductions in toxics use. As businesses develop plans, they will identify cost savings and see opportunities to implement the new technologies. It is also consistent with the advice that we received from our own expert panel as well as the position taken by Canadian Environmental Law Association and Environmental Defence Canada.

Mandatory reporting and planning requirements, combined with the voluntary implementation of toxics reduction plans, is a proven approach in other jurisdictions. We feel that it is the right way to go in Ontario as well, to make sure that less toxics are used in manufacturing processes, which is better for all of us.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Why is the Minister of Health forcing the local health integration networks to integrate with the Ontario Liberal Party?

Hon. David Caplan: That's a nonsense question. In fact, on our local health integration networks, we have individuals who have agreed to serve—members of local communities—to make important health care decisions affecting local communities.

I can assure you that members of the legislative Standing Committee on Government Agencies have the opportunity to call members forward who are seeking appointment to these boards, to question their qualifications. In fact, we have developed a skills-based matrix to outline the various skills of a well-rounded board.

The member's assertion and the premise of his question are simply nonsense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last Friday, the Waterloo Wellington LHIN announced hospital funding on letterhead also featuring the four liberal MPPs of our area, yet the opposition MPPs were deliberately excluded, even though some of the hospitals to receive the funding are in our

ridings. For example, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital is located in my riding, yet the member for Perth–Wellington announced the funding on a joint press release with the LHIN.

This means the government is politicizing our LHIN, making it a partisan arm of the Ontario Liberal Party to try to give the local Liberal MPPs a boost. It shows profound disrespect to the voters of Kitchener–Waterloo, Cambridge and Wellington–Halton Hills, who elected Conservative MPPs.

I'm concerned that people are going to start thinking that the LHIN acronym actually stands for Liberal Hacks In the News. Why is the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask that you withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw. Why is the minister forcing our LHIN to become partisan and prop up the local Liberal MPPs?

Hon. David Caplan: I did tell you that nothing could be further from the truth. If something was done inadvertently, I'm sure that the member—we will raise these issues with the leadership, with the chair and the CEO at the local health integration network in Waterloo Wellington.

I can tell you that I know from personal experience that the chair and CEO have brought the member and other members of all political parties into their confidence as they move forward on issues related to investment and issues related to work that is going on in the LHIN. I know this for a fact. I know the member has participated in these briefings and in these meetings. I know that the chair has shared much of this information related to the operation of the LHIN with all members of the Legislature, per the instructions that this government has set out.

I know that it was a different way of operating under a previous government, but this government believes in accountability and transparency and allowing all members to participate fully in the operation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The Minister of Health has repeatedly stated that this government is committed to providing quality home care and improving working conditions for the people who provide it.

Can he explain why a personal support worker will earn \$84 after working a 10-hour day? And more importantly, can he explain how the government plans to provide quality home care when the people who provide it are often left struggling below the poverty line?

Hon. David Caplan: I would have hoped that the member would have taken the opportunity to welcome and thank personal support workers for coming here to Queen's Park today. I can tell you how much I appreciate the work that they do, the lives that they change, the communities that they support and the care that they

provide. These are individuals who do tremendous work. That's why we have made an incredible investment in home care and in personal support workers.

I can tell you that one of the first things I had the opportunity to do was to increase—over 870 new and additional positions of personal support workers in the province of Ontario. That's why our recent budget reaffirmed our commitment to add over 2,000 additional personal support workers to provide home care services in the province of Ontario.

1110

I know that all members of the Legislature would want to know, for example, some of the actions that we have taken, like a \$30-million stabilization fund to help to boost the wages—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister has argued that his government's system of cut-throat bidding for home care contracts will actually improve quality in the system. I find that hard to swallow. Instead, it is chasing out the professionals who go to the homes every day and provide the care. Why has the minister ignored his promise to set basic employment standards in the home care sector that will ensure that home care workers will be at least paid for the hours they spend travelling on the job every day?

Hon. David Caplan: I fundamentally disagree with the member opposite. Having feedback from clients about the quality of care they receive is important for us because whenever you can measure, you can improve. Having feedback from the workers about the kind of work that they do and the kind of care that they support is important because if you can measure it, you can improve it.

Since our government came to office, home care funding has increased by over \$573 million since 2003-04—investments opposed by the member opposite and her colleagues. That represents a 50% increase in funding for home care and for the supports to clients, where we now have over 200,000 additional Ontarians today receiving home care services better than they had before.

Interjection.

Hon. David Caplan: The member opposite says that's shameful; I think that that's a truly remarkable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DIAMOND INDUSTRY

Mr. David Ramsay: I have a question today for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines regarding our diamond industry. I know that all members are aware that a couple of weeks ago, our diamond industry created quite a bit of excitement here in the Ontario Legislature as we witnessed history as we had placed two of the De Beers Victor mine diamonds into the Legislature's mace. With the reintroduction of the mace so well received across this province, it's a good example of the great relationship our government has with the De Beers Victor mine up in Timmins–James Bay.

Minister, I understand that at the prospectors and developers' convention and conference held in March, you participated in other diamond announcement. I ask you if you would tell the members of the House about that.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: My thanks to my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, one of the great advocates for mining, certainly in his riding and across the north. Indeed, he's right. This past month has been a great one for the diamond industry in Canada and specifically for the De Beers Victor mine in northern Ontario.

I'm happy to report that in early March, our government joined other stakeholders in establishing Canada's first diamond bourse here in Toronto. With the establishment of the bourse, Ontario has now joined the global stage as one of a few select countries that feature all of the elements of the diamond industry, from mining activities all the way to the retailing sector. This bourse, or diamond-creating centre, represents a very significant step in value-added activities across the province and throughout Canada. It will benefit North American retailers, wholesalers and buyers, who will be able to purchase or sell diamonds here rather than overseas.

With the establishment of the bourse and with other diamond announcements, I am confident that Canada and Ontario will become one of the world's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Ramsay: Thank you, Minister, for talking about Canada's first diamond bourse here in Ontario. This is great news for our province, as it will enhance Canada's position in the global diamond trade. Most importantly, it will add to our nation's reputation for the ethical production of the finest diamonds in the world.

Since the De Beers Victor mine opened last January, I know that our government has been working with De Beers and with representatives from the diamond sector to identify, develop and promote value-added diamond opportunities in this province. I understand that last summer you announced that our government had reached an agreement with De Beers Canada that would see 10% of the Victor mine's diamonds to be made available for value-added activities here in Ontario.

Minister, could you please inform the House about a very recent announcement that was made concerning De Beers value-added activities?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am certainly pleased to report that this past Monday, Minister Bartolucci and I had the honour of announcing that Crossworks Manufacturing Ltd. will be opening Ontario's first diamond cutting and polishing facility in the greater Sudbury area, creating over 50 jobs, which is tremendous news. This is fantastic news as Ontarians can look forward to purchasing diamonds that have been mined and now cut and polished in Ontario in the very near future. This facility, which is part of the agreement between our government and De Beers, will open later this year and it will cut and polish an estimated \$100 million of rough stones over the next two years—again, great news.

With this announcement, our government is not only following through on its commitment to create a value-added opportunity for mining diamonds in the province, but we're also placing greater Sudbury, already a great centre for mining excellence in the province, on the global diamond map, creating new employment opportunities in the process.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Ontario's nuclear industry employs over 30,000 women and men. Most of these jobs are dependant upon the success of one company headquartered in Mississauga. Over 100 other businesses supply this company with parts and services, and they are spread throughout the province of Ontario. Recently, you said that it was a crappy decision on the part of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. to purchase 22 Mercedes-Benz for a prize giveaway and you realized that was not supporting a domestic industry that provided thousands and thousands of jobs.

Do you think that buying French nuclear reactors at a cost of \$26 billion of Ontario's money—sending that overseas and killing an Ontario industry during a recession—would amount to a crappy decision as well, Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that there's quite a bit in the honourable member's question that might live up to his regularized use of that word. The point is that when he goes to purchase two new nuclear reactors, we do see the stakes as somewhat different than when we're purchasing some automobiles. I think that at hand here is the sheer necessity of making sure that associated with the purchase of any nuclear—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: We think it's very important, as we seek to acquire two new nuclear power plants in the province of Ontario—two new reactors—that we do so with a view towards their long-term reliability, to the costs associated with them and to the economic impacts that will accrue to the province of Ontario. That's exactly what our process is leaning toward. I don't know why the honourable member —

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yesterday, the Premier compared nuclear reactors to bottles of wine. I'm sure that you have had time to review the report by McKinsey and Co. commissioned by your own government. It is very clear on three points, the most important being that the only difference between the three technologies and that of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. was that their bid had a greater economic benefit to the province. Again, given the thousands of high-tech jobs at stake and the billions in Ontario GDP that will be gone because of a loss of export sales, are you going to stand up and support Ontario or send \$26 billion to France and the United

States, thereby sending 30,000 jobs, 100 companies and a vital Canadian industry down your crapper?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw his last comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is a crappy decision. I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: There is nothing that the honourable member presents as fact in the form of his question that I wish to corroborate. It is mischief-making, it is misinformed and it is irresponsible. We have a very fair process ongoing by which three companies were given the opportunity to tell us why we should build their product here, why we should take advantage of it. Those include reliability and price, and they most certainly give opportunity, with 20% of the rating focused on the economic opportunities associated with it. Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. certainly has an opportunity to make a strong case as to the economic impacts associated with their technology, but there is more to the purchase than that. We will continue to review this most important purchase on the basis of a wide variety of things, including price and reliability.

ATTAWAPISKAT FIRST NATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. You will know that the Department of Indian Affairs recently demolished the J.R. Nakogee school in Attawapiskat. In doing so, they've exposed what is a large diesel spill that has been there for some time, not only underneath the J.R. Nakogee school, but in the surrounding areas. Now what you have is a school that has been demolished, you have the ground that has been exposed and you have diesel fumes that are emanating throughout the community, into the school and into community homes. The community has asked you to send in inspectors from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour in order to assess the situation because they have no confidence in the federal government's ability to do so.

These are Ontario citizens. Are you prepared to take your responsibility as Premier and protect the health and safety of these citizens?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services can speak to this.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. Obviously, as he knows, Emergency Management Ontario is monitoring the situation and will provide advice and assistance to both the community and INAC as required. He also points out a very important point, that point being that the federal government has jurisdiction with regard to that.

It's my understanding that recent testing completed by Health Canada indicates that there are no significant risks

to the health and safety of the residents. But let me reinforce that Emergency Management Ontario is monitoring the situation and, certainly, if called upon through INAC, will be more than happy to go in there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Here's the problem: Those health officials at the federal department, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, are the same officials who said it was okay to bathe your children in Kashechewan in E. coli. So they have no confidence when it comes to those officials. That's why the chief and council, the local education authority and Mushkegowuk council are asking you to do what you did in the case of Kashechewan, and that is to use provincial ministry officials to go in and do the inspection to make sure that these people are in a situation that doesn't deteriorate their health conditions. If it was good enough for this assembly to take the diamonds of Attawapiskat and put them on the mace here in this Legislature, why is it not good enough for us to ensure the safety of these citizens?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me reinforce that the government of Ontario is doing their job. We will continue to do our job. Emergency Management Ontario will continue to ensure that they have a presence there. We will offer the help that the community and the federal government want if they ask for it.

The community knows that we have said that if the community would like the province to provide expertise to help verify the situation in the community, they can request our assistance through the federal government, through INAC, and we will assess the request and respond as expeditiously as possible. But let me reinforce that Emergency Management Ontario, our Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and his ministry—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. GO service to the city of Peterborough has long been an issue in my riding, and I constantly hear from constituents on this matter. They're asking, "When will it arrive?" I've been asking the same thing and have met with the Minister of Transportation a number of times about GO to Peterborough.

Many of my constituents travel outside of Peterborough to work, commuting to Oshawa, Whitby-Ajax and even as far as Toronto. There are students attending Trent University and Fleming College who moved here from all over the GTA and return to their families on weekends, for the summer and throughout the holidays. I've heard from these individuals about the concerns of congestion on our roads and how this government can help ease the gridlock they see.

I was pleased to hear that this government listened to the constituents of Peterborough, and our efforts were recognized. On Friday, April 3, I was able to announce the GO service bus to Peterborough. I'm hoping the

Minister of Transportation can share with this House the exact details and what this initiative will mean to the good residents of Peterborough.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to thank the member for his question. He has been a tireless advocate on this specific issue. I have indeed met with him on a number of occasions, and I'm pleased he was able to deliver for his community.

Peterborough area commuters will benefit from GO bus service as the province expands the GO Transit service area to bring additional and better transit service to more individuals. The new GO bus will travel to and from the current GO station in Oshawa, allowing those who work in Oshawa to leave their cars at home, and, for those who work beyond Oshawa, to easily connect with the Lakeshore East GO rail service.

GO is currently developing an implementation option—several options, in fact—for bus service to Peterborough, and plans to introduce bus service by the fall of 2009. GO Transit is also engaging in an environmental assessment to extend rail service from Oshawa to Bowmanville. This will bring the bus-rail connection even closer to Highway 115, making it more convenient for those communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: First the hospital, and now GO bus. Ontario's transit planning and implementation efforts are really coming together, and this government seems to be working hard to include Peterborough in these plans.

Peterborough is not the only area to benefit from the GO Transit announcement last week. While GO bus service to Peterborough is a provincial initiative, I understand that it was announced on Friday that GO Transit riders across the GTA and surrounding areas will benefit from an additional \$213 million in service improvements as part of the \$500-million investment between the government of Ontario and the government of Canada. The projects will reduce wait times for commuters and get more cars off the road.

These announcements show how Ontario is working to build a regional transit network with more transit projects to create jobs, stimulate the economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion.

I was hoping the Minister of Transportation would shed some more light for this House on more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Friday's announcement built upon the \$250 million in federal and provincial funding previously announced by the Premier and Prime Minister for GO Transit expansion, parking facilities across the greater Toronto area and the Hamilton Junction rail-to-rail grade separation project, bringing the total commitment to \$500 million. In addition to maintenance activities across the system, GO will refurbish locomotives, purchase new two-level passenger rail coaches, install snowmelt systems and build bicycle shelters. This announcement means Burlington GO station will see a new pedestrian bridge, Streetsville will see bus storage expan-

sion, Exhibition station will see pedestrian tunnel extension, and Richmond Hill Centre bus terminal will see a third platform and two new shelters. We will continue to make public transit a priority for everyone—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Yesterday, the Premier was given an opportunity to be accountable to the hard-working taxpayers in the province of Ontario by calling in the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit of the Smart Systems for Health Agency, an agency which, of course, was quietly abolished after spending \$647 million of taxpayer money. Well, yesterday, the Premier said no to accountability to taxpayers. Today, he has an opportunity to say yes. Will the Premier support our party's opposition day motion and our accountability amendment to the budget to be debated this afternoon and say, "Yes, I am accountable to the taxpayers of this province"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: Of course all members are accountable, not only to this Legislature but to Ontarians.

I know that the member would want to tell the full story. The Auditor General, along with his counterparts right across the country, is undertaking a thorough audit of eHealth, following up on the investments of Canada Health Infoway. I know that the member knows this, but she somehow tries to weave a tale where these things are not happening, including the cost-effectiveness and the approach to procurement. I'm looking forward to learning about this audit and incorporating it into our plans and processes.

In fact, it was my predecessor who undertook an operational review. It did not take an auditor or an opposition member or anybody else but his own initiative—an operational review of the Smart Systems for Health Agency. What they found, as the member did disclose yesterday, is that that agency was set up with an incorrect roadmap by the previous—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very disappointed that the Premier chose not to answer the question regarding whether or not he is prepared to be accountable, transparent and honest with the taxpayers in the province of Ontario, because we do know that this government has received warnings from the Auditor General about slush fund abuse and year-end spending sprees. In fact, its knuckles were rapped just before the 2007 election and a minister was forced to resign when the AG revealed that this government gave the Ontario Cricket Association a million dollars when they asked for \$150,000 and gave a host of other groups thousands and thousands of dollars, again, without anybody submitting applications, and with no criteria or any transparency.

So I ask you again, Premier: Have you learned your lesson or will you continue to deceive the people in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The member opposite simply doesn't get it. Ontario cannot afford not to proceed. Electronic health will reduce hospital stays. It will avoid duplication and unnecessary testing, resulting in more appropriate drug utilization and other efficiencies.

This member really needs to do her homework. We have a huge challenge ahead of us, and we will ensure that the dollars are spent wisely. But make no doubt, anyone here, that we need to invest in change, including projects, people, and engaging contractors, vendors, partners and employees.

Listen, we're competing with our American neighbours. President Obama plans to spend \$50 billion over the next five years to get electronic health records for every American. That massive investment dwarfs what we're doing in Ontario, but I can assure members of this House that Ontario has the opportunity to beat the United States to that finish line—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week, we celebrated community living in this Legislature. A whole bunch of flowery speeches were made, but they were much ado about nothing. If this government was really honest about providing barrier-free community living, why are people living on ODSP subjected to regulations that are tantamount to human rights infringements?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very proud to stand here as the Minister of Community and Social Services with all the good investment that we have done in developmental disabilities. Last week we celebrated the closure of our institutions, and again this week we continue that celebration, because it was the right thing to do.

With regard to those on ODSP—most of those with developmental disabilities are receiving ODSP. We have been increasing ODSP since we were elected by 11%. I'm very proud of that.

We continue to review these programs to improve them. This government will continue to review every program in my ministry to make sure that we improve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: In today's Toronto Star, Carol Goar has blown the whistle on this government's sub-standard treatment of our disabled community. They are forced to live in poverty and under a system that instills fear. Loans are considered to be income. Their measly stipend gets reduced if they have to borrow money. When recipients are summonsed to local ODSP offices, those with limited mobility must choose between transportation costs and a healthy meal. This government even

dictates how often they can move. If you are disabled in Ontario, you'd better hope your eyesight doesn't become worse or that you don't need a cane, because the minister won't pay. And the lucky ones who work part-time have their wages clawed back by this very same government.

My question: Why does this government choose to treat our disabled Ontarians with such disrespect?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I regret to say to the member of the opposite party that I don't think he's right. This government has always stood behind those with physical and psychological disabilities. We were very proud in 2005 to adopt the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and we are working on developing standards. The standards will be in place within the next months.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those who were involved in developing the standards. We're the first ones in Canada, and I'm very proud of it. So those with physical disabilities will be able to work, if it's possible for them. They will be able to enjoy all the activities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just a few years ago, this government established the Ministry of Health Promotion. On the website, under "Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living," we read: "An epidemic of overweight and obesity is threatening Ontario's health. I am alarmed to report that, in 2003, almost one out of every two adults in Ontario was overweight or obese." As well, the ministry goes on to state: "Many young people do not have the opportunity to be physically active.... More people do not have enough income to make healthy food choices."

Well, the McGuinty budget just made it harder for Ontarians to battle the bulge. The McGuinty sales tax will be charged on gym memberships. With all the other expenses this 13% McGuinty sales tax is creating, a gym membership may be the first thing that people would drop from their household budgets. Fitness equipment and bicycles will also be taxed at 13%, and Ontarians will have less money in their pockets to afford healthy and nutritional food options. Energy bars and energy drinks will cost more. People will reach for that can of pop or that chocolate bar.

This 13% McGuinty sales tax is a lose-lose situation, not only for those who want to drop a few pounds but also for the state of Ontario's health. According to the report the Minister of Health Promotion commissioned,

this government should be doing its utmost to provide incentives rather than taking them away.

EARTHQUAKE IN ITALY

Mr. Paul Miller: All of us in this Legislature have been deeply saddened by the news this week of the devastating earthquake that hit the Abruzzo region of central Italy. The earthquake has killed hundreds, injured thousands and has destroyed countless homes, schools and businesses. Thousands of people are now living in tents and face uncertain futures as rescue efforts continue.

The shocking news of this earthquake has had an especially profound effect on the Hamilton area, which is home to the largest Italian community from the Abruzzo region. Many residents trace their roots back to that region. The community is mobilizing a relief effort and will be fundraising. Over the coming weeks, donations will be needed to support those in temporary shelters and to help rebuild many homes and structures. Fundraising plans are currently in development, and I will keep this Legislature updated on specific details as they unfold. I will post a link on my website, paulmillermpp.ca, to information on ways to help out.

I encourage all my colleagues here and anyone listening to give what you can. This is a very serious situation. The people in my community are also devastated by it and have lost relatives in this earthquake. We hope that Ontario, like it always does, responds well to the situation.

HERB GRAY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: As the MPP for Carleton University, it is my distinct honour to congratulate the Right Honourable Herb Gray on being installed as the 10th chancellor of Carleton University. Former chancellors at Carleton have included Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn and astronaut Marc Garneau, to name a few.

Mr. Gray has a long and highly distinguished career of service to Canada, beginning when he was first elected to the House of Commons by the people of Windsor West in 1962. He was re-elected 12 times and served over that period as Minister of Industry, Minister of Trade, Minister of Commerce, Minister of Revenue, Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, president of the Treasury Board and Solicitor General. In 1997, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien named him Deputy Prime Minister, a post he held until his retirement in 2003. Upon his retirement, he was granted the title "Right Honourable" in recognition of his long and record-setting contribution to public life, and he is one of only a handful of Canadians to ever receive such an honour.

At the installation ceremony, Mr. Gray promised to help maintain and strengthen Carleton as a place of light, of liberty and of learning for all of its present and future students and faculty.

Through the president of Carleton University, Roseann O'Reilly Runte, the chair of the board of governors, Jacques Shore, and CUSA President Brittany Smyth, I congratulate the students, faculty and administration of Carleton University for choosing a Canadian icon to be the new chancellor.

GREEN ENERGY LEGISLATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: A constituent in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon has been denied the opportunity to speak before the standing committee for Bill 150, the Green Energy Act.

Barbara Ashbee is a resident of Amaranth and is today living with the side effects of having wind turbines surround her home. In fact, the closest turbine is measured just 450 metres from her house. Yet my constituent has been refused an opportunity to share her experiences during public hearings on Bill 150.

This is just what I was afraid was going to happen. I've spoken to this in this chamber on numerous occasions to voice my concerns and those of my constituents about the Green Energy Act. This act removes all oversight from municipalities. Now this government is not even going to listen to the concerns of someone who has first-hand experience. It's important to the legislative process that people like Barbara Ashbee, who live every day with the side effects of wind turbines, be allowed to speak and share their experiences.

Myself and members of the Progressive Conservative Party have been calling for public input from interest groups and communities that have wind farms. I had hoped that we could all work together to create legislation that meets the needs of communities across our province. It looks as though the government is once again leaving out the most important interest group when proposing new legislation: the people.

MARKHAM DISTRICT VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I recently attended an event hosted by the Markham District Veterans Association to celebrate its recent award by the Ontario Trillium Foundation in the amount of \$41,000, to be used to support repairs and renovations which will enhance the safety and comfort of its members at its community facility in Markham. I was pleased to meet with Paul Kearns, who is the association's current president, and Trevor Cleland, the immediate past president, along with my good friend and colleague Minister Michael Chan, to celebrate the well-deserved grant.

For the past 60 years, the Markham District Veterans Association, located at 7 Washington Street, near Main Street Markham, has been central to our community. The association exists to commemorate the friendships, associations and memories of the veterans of the armed forces of Canada, Her Majesty's armed forces, allied services and reserve forces.

In addition, the association helps with worthy community projects, a highlight of which is the annual town of Markham Remembrance Day ceremonies. The association hosts veteran and community events, including weekly billiard and euchre competitions, as well as a monthly dance and other social events.

I have the honour of being an associate member of the association, and I want to thank the government of Ontario and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for recognizing the ongoing work of the Markham District Veterans Association, whose facility will continue to be an important gathering place for residents of Oak Ridges–Markham for many years to come.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank the representatives of the ALS Society of Ontario for meeting with MPPs at Queen's Park on Tuesday, April 7. I know that members appreciate the society's efforts in raising awareness and keeping each of us informed.

ALS is also known as Lou Gehrig's disease; 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians have ALS, and close to half of that number are in Ontario. This is a fatal, rapidly progressing neuromuscular disease.

The ALS Society of Ontario is committed to providing the necessary support, services and equipment to people with ALS, as well as research towards a cure. The reasonable requests that were addressed to me were the diagnosis of patients as being palliative for their care, provided under the CCAC, as well as changes to the assistive devices program.

In my riding of Durham, the Walk for ALS takes place on June 27 at the Port Perry Fairgrounds. Heather Moore is the chair of the Port Perry walk. It's one of 23 taking place across the province.

I would urge members to support the ALS Society in their local campaigns and in their advocacy and awareness initiatives at Queen's Park. I personally thank Maureen Sheahan, the president and CEO, and Tim and Beth Robertson. Tim has ALS, and his wife, Beth, is a supportive, caring person. I thank them for providing us with the information, and I do support their cause.

TIBETAN CANADIANS

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Tashi Delek, Speaker. I rise today to recognize an important community in my riding. The Tibetan community has enriched the lives of all residents in Etobicoke–Lakeshore with their rich culture and heritage.

1510

This past Saturday, my family and I had the privilege of attending the Tibetan community's thanksgiving celebration at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre. This celebration marks the 50 years of exile of the Tibetan people and was an opportunity to thank the government and people in Canada and India.

During this event that was attended by members of all political parties with representation from different levels

of government, the Tibetan community expressed their gratitude to the leaders and citizens who have provided invaluable support and assistance. But in reality, it is us who should be saying thank you to the Tibetan community. Canada is a nation founded on the principle of multiculturalism, and right here in Ontario, we understand the importance of helping new immigrants maintain their culture while becoming active members in Canadian society.

The Tibetan community in Etobicoke–Lakeshore have this Canadian value at heart and have undertaken the development of the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre. The facility provides a vast array of cultural and recreational services, and I am very pleased that an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant helped to make this facility become more accessible.

It is often said that Canada's greatest strength is its diversity. In Etobicoke–Lakeshore we are stronger, thanks to the efforts of the Tibetan community.

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISABLED

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The province of Ontario has set an example for the rest of the country to follow. We witnessed last week the closure of the final three institutions for people who have intellectual disabilities. We celebrated this success amongst our constituents at Community Living London. Our government was recognized for taking the initiative and moving forward towards more effective methods of living. Minister Bentley, Minister Matthews and I were there to show our commitment to make Ontario an inclusive society for every citizen.

The move to close these institutions has been a long time in the making. It's important to say that the first institution was built 160 years ago. Ontarians have been working hard to find an alternative to it for over 60 years. Many families began to understand that community-based living would be the best method to encourage healthy development.

Over 12,000 people are served by community living homes across the province of Ontario, and they are proving to be the better alternative. I would like to offer my congratulations to the families who initiated this project, and a special acclaim to those who ensured that every centre would be closed here in Ontario.

Thank you to all the people who work across the province to support people with intellectual disabilities. A great thanks especially to Michelle Palmer, the director of Community Living London, for the great job she's doing on behalf of our people in the city of London.

RURAL SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to inform the House that on Monday, April 6, the annual Premier's summit on agri-food was held. It was a wonderful occasion, and today, I'm very pleased to inform the House of another positive development for rural Ontario: the return of the popular rural summer jobs program.

The program provides a \$2-per-hour wage reimbursement to eligible employers that create summer jobs for students between the ages of 14 and 24, and up to age 29 if the student has a disability. Last year, 106 businesses in Huron–Bruce participated in the program. That was the highest uptake of the program in the province of Ontario. This year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to providing up to \$3 million to help rural employers create student employment opportunities. Applications from employers can be submitted until April 17, and employers can benefit from the program for up to 16 weeks.

The global economic downturn has had a severe effect on student summer jobs, and the rural summer jobs service program will go a long way in helping our students meet their financial needs, certainly, those who are going on for post-secondary education. This is more good news for the riding of Huron–Bruce.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / *Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to talk about the Ministry of Education's equity and inclusive education strategy called Realizing the Promise of Diversity. I'm very pleased to do this because I believe that this strategy will make a huge difference to students, to parents, to teachers, to administrators, to support staff and to school communities all over Ontario.

As I do this, I want to acknowledge a few people who have been absolutely critical to the development of this strategy, and those are, first of all, Dr. Avis Glaze and Dr. Karen Mock, who led the group. There were many, many people from different backgrounds who were part of putting this strategy together. Within the Ministry of Education, I want to acknowledge the work of Ruth Flynn, who worked so hard to put this strategy together.

As a member of the community who 20 years ago was working on one of my first education initiatives at the Toronto Board of Education at that time, education against homophobia, it is a real privilege to be able to introduce this strategy today.

All students deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. That's why our government has taken steps over the past five years to raise student achievement. We have made significant investments and introduced many initiatives in the publicly funded education system to help more students succeed.

I'm proud of the progress that we've made to date. More elementary students are succeeding on province-wide reading, writing and math tests, and more high school students are graduating. But there is more work to be done.

Nous voulons éliminer tous les obstacles à la réussite des élèves, notamment la discrimination, la faible confiance en soi et le manque de respect.

Research tells us, and so do our hearts, that students who feel welcome and accepted in their schools are more likely to excel academically. Unfortunately, some students still face homophobia, racism, sexism and all the other types of "isms" that are symbols of intolerance in our schools. So we are taking action.

Earlier this week, we launched our equity and inclusive education strategy. We envision an inclusive education system in Ontario in which all students, parents and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected.

We're not talking about tolerance. We're talking about going way beyond tolerance. We want every student to be supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning. Our strategy will help us move closer to achieving that vision.

We are giving our school boards and schools the support they need to better address barriers related to discrimination. I'm confident that this will have a direct impact on student achievement. Highlights of the strategy include the following initiatives:

—The ministry will release guidelines to assist boards in the development, implementation and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies.

—The ministry will include equity and inclusive education principles in all curriculum and assessment policy documents, learning resources and leadership initiatives.

—The ministry will develop new courses in gender studies and equity to be available for schools to offer in September 2011.

—School boards will establish or update equity and inclusive education policies and actively engage students,

staff, parents and their broader communities in this activity.

—Schools will develop improvement plans that are aligned with Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy.

These actions build on the great work already under way in schools and boards and through community groups to embrace diversity across our province. I want to thank them for providing valuable feedback during the consultation process as we build this province-wide strategy. We will now move forward together towards meeting the needs of our diverse student population.

I'm certain this strategy will go a long way in helping students build the focus, determination and self-esteem they need to succeed in the classroom. I've been told by teachers, support staff and students that just by getting that permission, getting that support from the ministry as a first step, they will be able to develop programs and initiatives that they have been wanting to do in their schools, and to support ones that are already in place. This will also have a long-term positive impact on our province.

1520

L'une des plus grandes forces de l'Ontario, c'est la diversité. Il y a plus de 200 langues parlées comme langue maternelle dans notre province. Les gens qui s'identifient comme gens de couleur représentent un quart de la population de l'Ontario.

Learning to welcome, accept and respect people's differences and to work together to find common ground will not be forgotten after graduation. These are lessons that will last a lifetime.

We are helping today's students develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable and caring citizens who can contribute to both a strong economy and a cohesive society. Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. Every Ontarian deserves to live in a strong community and have a bright future. Our equity and inclusive education strategy will help to realize the promise of diversity. Our strategy will help Ontario prosper.

I want to just close by paraphrasing the Honourable Jean Augustine, who attended our launch yesterday. She is, as you know, Ontario's Fairness Commissioner, but she is a long-time fighter for equity in this province. I am paraphrasing, and she said along these lines, of this strategy: "Today, we aren't where we should be, we aren't where we ought to be, we aren't where we're going to be, but today, we aren't where we were."

Thank you very much.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to stand down the opposition's response, as Mrs. Witmer is not here just at the moment—she is on her way—and allow the NDP to proceed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I welcome the statement. Issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity are of a particular priority for New Democrats. When a government

puts together a strategy for equity and inclusive education, we say, "Okay, good. God bless." We hope it will do whatever good the minister says it will do, because when I look at all of the things that happen in our society and in our school system, I worry.

Will this strategy deal with some of the issues? I don't know. Discrimination has existed against gays, lesbians and bisexuals for a long, long time. Is it getting better? I think it is. Will we eliminate discrimination against them? I don't know. But whatever strategy we can propose that helps is a good one.

Racism is a particular plague and it continues to hurt us all of the time. I'm going to make mention of some issues that persist today and that are worrisome.

Sexism is still an issue, of course, and other issues.

But when I look at some of the people who are not getting the attention they deserve, like special education, which we were dealing with in committee today, and I look at how many young people languish, either in the regular classroom without the support, or because they are not getting the Identification, Placement and Review Committee support that they desperately need, or they are not getting the ongoing support that allows people, parents and others, to monitor whether or not some of those individual plans that should be done are indeed helping those kids, I just say to myself, "I just don't know." So I worry for special-education kids.

I worry about the English-as-a-second-language program and students who desperately need English as a second language and are not getting it. That's an issue of diversity; it's an issue of equity. How many schools have so many immigrant kids who don't have a Latin background to be able to understand our language and therefore languish in classrooms without ESL support? How many of those students are not getting ESL support? In the north end there are complete schools without any support. The government says, of course, they're getting ESL, but in many boards and in many schools there is no ESL.

I think about children's mental health services that are woefully uncoordinated and wholly inadequate.

I think of racial inequities that are on the rise in a faltering economy. Members of racialized communities are bracing for the worst. The United Way of Greater Toronto reports that racialized communities are two to three times more likely to be poor. The urban-suburban schools report from People for Education reminds us that children from racialized communities still experience high dropout rates. The Roots of Youth Violence report found that "racism is becoming a more serious and entrenched problem because Ontario is not dealing with it."

It's shameful that the School Community Safety Advisory Panel report, which Julian Falconer was part of, is not reflected at all in this strategy today. Yet that report has a depth and breadth of research and recommendations that are invaluable, and a number of strong recommendations on equity education. That panel proposed that the Ministry of Education create a specific

portfolio, entitled the provincial safety and equity officer, to be the repository for receiving reports concerning serious issues of youth safety in our schools and equity concerns. There's no reference to the anti-racist secretariat to be able to deal with issues in a comprehensive way across the province.

Today, when I asked the Minister of Education about the issue of the school finder website that the government has put up, which institutionalizes school shopping in Ontario, a practice that is all over the US, and encourages discrimination based on ethnicity and income, which is detestable and appalling, I found that the minister and the Premier think it's okay and that parents really want it, whereas I point out that it's highly discriminatory.

I say these things, and the minister has a strategy today that deals with issues of equity and discrimination. Okay. I hope that parts of this will work some day, and as we go, maybe she'll report on a regular basis how this is working, so that maybe I'll have something positive to say. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to stand, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, to respond to the government's equity and inclusive education strategy. There has never been a time when education was more important to the future of our province than it is today. It's obvious that we need to prepare our students by teaching them and providing them with the knowledge and skills they're going to need to be successful in the 21st century. We need to ensure that all of Ontario's children, no matter what their background or what advantages they have or which challenges they face or where they come from or where they live—it's just very important to ensure that they all have the same educational opportunities.

As a former secondary school teacher, board chair and Minister of Education, I think I understand first-hand some of the challenges that our students and teachers face today. These challenges are highlighted by the government's equity and inclusive education strategy. Ontario's public education system has many strengths, but we all know there are significant areas where we can improve. The equity and inclusive education strategy describes some areas where improvements can certainly be made.

I would encourage the government to seriously and vigorously tackle the achievement gaps too often found with recent immigrants, children from low-income families, aboriginal students, boys and students with special needs. I believe these gaps can be bridged. I believe our province can build on its strengths with all our educational partners. Our caucus is ready to help foster an education system that has the flexibility to meet the individual needs and that is focused on achieving the best outcomes for all students, including those who are new to our province or who may be marginalized.

I know that all of us in this House want the same thing; that is, the best we can possibly provide for every student in our classrooms. All of us, whether we're stu-

dents, parents or teachers, need to be confident that our schools provide a safe, secure and respectful environment for students and teachers to learn, work and play. Teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn if they are in fear for their safety or feel oppressed.

1530

As a former teacher and as a parent, I take very seriously the safety of everyone in the school community. That's why in 2000 our government introduced the Safe Schools Act, which included the Ontario schools code of conduct. Through this legislation we aimed to create a safer school environment throughout the province to ensure that no student was bullied, threatened or intimidated. The code states that all members of the school community should be treated with respect and dignity, and I certainly urge the government to continue to take steps in partnership to make Ontario schools even safer learning and teaching environments. We need to understand that some of our students will always need assistance to help them succeed and achieve their potential. Key to student success is the need for early identification of students who are at risk and the development of appropriate support programs.

That's why, in 2002, our government funded several initiatives to help students improve their skills, including the language grant for funding English as a second language for students who were recent immigrants. We also provided help to Canadian-born students who did not have adequate knowledge of English, usually because English was not spoken at home. We also introduced the student-focused funding model because we were concerned about the social needs of students in this province.

Our government made progress in creating an educational system that was more equitable and responsive to student needs and more accountable to parents. I'm confident that school boards and schools will continue to develop programs for all of the students in our province who are at risk as they have always done. Through Ontario's education partners, this province can rise—and I know it will—to the challenge of realizing the promise of diversity. It will take time, hard work, focus and determination, but it can be done and I want to indicate to you that I am prepared to help, as are my colleagues.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition was gathered at the Orangeville home show this past weekend.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Dufferin–Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax ... that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario" families.

I support this petition and I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Sarah.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government has undertaken to spend \$32.5 billion on infrastructure such as mass transportation over the next two years; and

"Whereas this spending is intended to sustain and create jobs and pump much-needed financial capital into the Ontario economy; and

"Whereas it is important that goods and services used to facilitate this infrastructure initiative be made in Ontario; and

"Whereas the opposition parties believe that this made-in-Ontario approach should only apply to 50% of the goods and services used to upgrade Ontario's infrastructure; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has worked diligently to ensure that 82% of all monies committed to infrastructure projects across Ontario go to Ontario-based companies,

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for supporting Ontario-based industries during these challenging economic times."

I agree with this petition and I affix my signature myself.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge which reads:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

"Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

"(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital."

As I support this petition, I affix my name thereto.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition here in regard to the Clarkson airshed and the power plant proposed for the area. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and

"Whereas the average annual PM2.5 concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry's air quality index monitoring stations; and ...

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

"Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed study area; and ...

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I affix my signature and present it to Mark.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to see you in the chair this afternoon.

I have a number of petitions from my constituents in the riding of Durham. Jim Park is in technical and regulatory affairs—and OOIDA, which is the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, a number of whom were here in the Legislature yesterday, trying to educate members. The petition they presented to me reads as follows:

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

I am pleased to present this to page Carmen on her third-last day. You've got two more days?

I'm pleased to sign this.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: It's always a pleasure to introduce this petition into the House. I want to thank Mr. Alexander for bringing it to my attention to be introduced. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor"—good member.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and" their "grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and"—finally—

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions? The member for Guelph. No, the member for Cambridge. There we go.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: It's with great pleasure, ex-cruciating pleasure, I see you in the chair today, Mr. Speaker.

I have petitions signed by good citizens of Cambridge which read:

"Whereas there is no law in Ontario prohibiting pornography and other sexually explicit material from being viewed on computers in public schools and libraries; and

"Whereas there are public schools and public libraries that do not use Internet filtering software on computers that blocks such inappropriate material; and

"Whereas parents in the province of Ontario have the right to ensure their children are protected from pornography and other inappropriate material available on the Internet in their public schools and libraries;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: That all public schools and libraries in Ontario be required to install Internet filtering software on computers to avoid screening of sites with inappropriate, explicit sexual content."

As I support this petition, I affix my name thereto.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm sure the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will want to listen to this petition very carefully. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure and all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities in creating a green energy sector via the Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut for the tax rate in Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05 % to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by our children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects

all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people.”

I, of course, agree with this and affix my signature to it.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, I want to thank the independent truckers: Laura O'Neill, Joanne Ritchie, Scott Mooney, Jim Park, Jack Logan and a number of people who had an education reception last night on the important issue which is the subject of the petition they presented to me, and I guaranteed them I would read it on their behalf. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

“Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour,” which is well over the speed limit, too;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

“That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country.”

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this and present it to Emily, one of the pages, on her second-last day of being here.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to stand and introduce a second petition today. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

I'm pleased to sign my signature and support this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with Burk's Falls health centre:

“Burk's Falls health centre petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Burk's Falls health centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk's Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

“Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

“Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka–East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk's Falls health centre;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk's Falls health centre.”

I give this to page Daphnée.

LUPUS

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to read in my third petition of the day, and it reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

“Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

“We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario.”

I want to thank the Lupus Foundation located in my riding for providing me with this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for petitions has expired.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I move the following opposition day motion:

Whereas the budget introduced on March 26, 2009, would give the McGuinty government the authority to spend an extraordinary and unprecedented amount of taxpayer money;

Whereas since 2005, the Auditor General has been highly critical of the McGuinty government's lack of accountability, controls and transparency with respect to transfers of taxpayer money, particularly at the end of the fiscal year;

That the Legislative Assembly call on the McGuinty government to amend Bill 162 to provide that the McGuinty government table reports in this House no later than five sitting days before the end of each of the sitting periods of the 2009-10 fiscal year:

(a) to provide ongoing economic and fiscal updates;

(b) to detail the actual implementation of the budget;

(c) to itemize the actual effects of the budget with respect to the minimizing of existing job losses, the creation of new private sector jobs, the provision of economic stimulus in a manner fair to all regions of Ontario, the assurance that the government's deficit is not a burden to future generations; and

(d) to disclose the name of the project to which the infrastructure funding is being provided, the nature of the project and what it is intended to achieve in fighting the recession, its location, including the provincial electoral district in which it is located, the amount of provincial funding involved, any other funding partners and the amounts of their contributions, the department and program under which the provincial funding is being provided; and

That each such report shall automatically and immediately be posted on an accessible and interactive government website, and be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates and to the Auditor General.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number two. Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: There's an old saying, "Once bitten, twice shy." Well, the taxpayers, businesses and families of Ontario have been bitten often and very deeply by the McGuinty government. They have had their trust betrayed, seen promises broken and been saddled with punishing taxation and enormous debts that will plague their descendants for generations to come.

Ontarians look to their government for strong leadership, fresh ideas and the empathy they need in difficult times. Instead, they've been offered only platitudes and more of the failed policies that have worsened the recession instead of easing it.

We all recall, just two years ago, the auditor's scathing criticism of the McGuinty government over slushgate,

where they shovelled millions of tax dollars out the door to their friends. The Auditor General described the McGuinty government's spending controls as among the worst he'd ever seen.

It's no wonder that all Ontarians are cynical. It's only natural that they do not trust this government to do what is needed. Ontarians need some reassurance that things will be different this time; that Mr. McGuinty and his crew will not be able to get away with more rhetoric and no responsibility for their failings. That's the intent of our motion today: to ensure that this government is held to account.

It is a sad situation—there's no doubt about it—when responsibility has to be imposed on a government instead of being assumed. However, we in the official opposition have to be realistic, given the Liberals' long and sordid history of mismanaging Ontario's economy.

Members across the floor are not anxious to review the evidence of their economic policy failures, I'm sure, but I'm going to proceed anyway. It's a long and unhappy list, and I'm concerned that my colleagues opposite may find themselves sunk in depression and consumed by guilt when they contemplate their own sorry record. However, I want to show the necessity for this motion, so I will proceed.

We can go all the way back to the start of the McGuinty era, when the Premier broke his word to Ontarians regarding taxes. Instead of no new taxes, as he promised, he brought in the largest tax hike in Ontario history. Since then, he has completed the triple crown for tax-and-spend politicians: the largest tax hike, the largest deficit and the largest debt ever seen in this province. Those accomplishments alone are enough to put this government in the hall of shame and enough to destroy public faith in their economic management. But that is not all. The litany of failure continues.

Dalton McGuinty has taken Ontario from first to last in economic growth. Dalton McGuinty has made Ontario into a have-not province for the first time in its proud history. Dalton McGuinty frittered away \$26 billion in extra revenue instead of preparing for the inevitable rainy day. And Dalton McGuinty has overseen an abysmal record of job creation: 129,000 full-time jobs lost since the last election and a quarter million manufacturing jobs killed since he first took office.

However, when it comes to hiring people on the public payroll, they're up 19%. They've hired as many public servants as all the other provinces in Canada put together. When it comes to creating jobs in the private sector, jobs that create wealth instead of just moving tax dollars around, Ontario is up only 1% in six years—just 1%—less than the rate of population growth.

Despite all the public hiring and the huge increase in six-figure salaries they're offering for public servants, overall employment in Ontario continues to fall. Our economy has lost more than 61,000 jobs since the last election.

My friends opposite should be hanging their heads in shame on the topic of job creation, the most important

measure of economic strength. Their policies have been disastrous on that score, but they've refused to change course. They continue to tell Ontarians that they can get us out of the hole they created if only they keep digging.

McGuinty's latest budget is the latest example. It fails to address the dire needs of Ontarians, and instead threatens to continue on the path of broken promises and failed ideas. I have a very limited time, so I cannot list all the ways this budget fails, but some of us have families to go home to, but this budget not only fails parents who are looking to put their children in full-day kindergarten, it not only fails patients looking for improved health care services, it also fails to provide Ontario families with the help they need in the face of the current economic crisis. This budget does not provide Ontarians with the plan they need and deserve, the fresh approach and practical ideas to get our economy going again. Instead, we have more of the same: more spending without accountability and more taxation without mercy.

In their rush to make up for the wasted years, years when they were flush with money but flushed that money away, in their panic to be seen to be acting, this government risks wasting yet more public money. The good intentions of infrastructure spending are being put at risk—limited time for due diligence, insufficient planning that could see projects run short of money and a lack of accountability for real benefits for taxpayers. While they are proud to be seen throwing taxpayer money at infrastructure, they're ashamed to be seen spending those same tax dollars in other ways: on inflated salaries, opulent office renovations, entertainment and travel expenses, and other slaps in the face to taxpayers.

It's frightening to note that under his plan, Mr. McGuinty will have tripled the deficit and doubled Ontario's debt. We all know that Bob Rae has become a Liberal, but we didn't realize the Ontario Liberals wanted to become Bob Rae. He must be very proud.

But even to achieve those horrendous numbers, the McGuinty plan calls for program spending to be held at 3.6% increases in the next three years and 2.6% increases for four years after that. The fact of the matter is that this government has increased spending by 8% every year, and now you want people to believe that you will somehow overcome your spending addiction and cut your habit by half, then by two thirds. Again, you can't blame Ontarians for being cynical. As the Premier himself has said, and I'm quoting Dr. Phil, "The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour." Taxpayers would be well advised to take this government's plan with a large block of salt.

Finally, this budget claims to confront the economic crisis, but the only thing it confronts is taxpayers' wallets. Dalton McGuinty's response to the global recession, to the cries for help from struggling Ontario families is to raise taxes yet again: tax hikes on everything from heating your home to driving your car, from using the Internet to going to the gym, from shoes for adults to audiobooks for the blind. This is the boot to the face instead of the helping hand that Ontarians needed.

Unfortunately, Mr. McGuinty and his friends hold a majority in this Legislature. The sad truth is that they can force this budget through, despite its major failings and despite anything that we in the opposition may say or do. So we have searched for a constructive way to limit the damage of this hollow plan, a way for Ontarians to have at least some assurance that this government will be held responsible. If the members opposite choose to reject our reasoning, to ignore all of the evidence of their botched policies and shameful record, that is no more than we expect from them. However, if you truly believe that your budget will somehow defy the laws of economics and actually work, then I invite you to put your votes where your mouths are: Support this motion, welcome the idea of accountability, prove that you have faith in your ideas, as discredited as they are, and that you are willing to be measured by their success. Or vote against this reasonable motion and tell Ontarians that you have as little faith in your economic plan as they do and that as an organization the Liberal Party of Ontario is bankrupt of ideas, bankrupt of integrity and bankrupting this great province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: New Democrats support this motion and all measures that will increase fiscal and economic transparency in this legislative process. Indeed, the budget was extremely vague on many matters related to the stimulus package. This motion, if passed, would go some way towards reassuring this House that the matters outlined in the budget were in fact being implemented. That is of particular concern with the housing and infrastructure money, which, if not spent in the next 12 to 18 months, will be of little use in fighting the current recession. New Democrats support this motion and any measure that increases government accountability, particularly in times of economic crisis.

1600

I want to address something that was not in the motion that New Democrats believe would go a long way toward increasing fiscal accountability in this House. New Democrats strongly believe that the creation of an Ontario equivalent to the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer would be of extraordinary benefit to increasing accountability around here. The federal Parliamentary Budget Officer has been provided with a broad mandate to support Parliament and parliamentarians in holding the government to account for the good stewardship of public resources. The Federal Accountability Act specifically mandated the Parliamentary Budget Officer to provide independent analysis to the Senate and to the House of Commons regarding the state of the nation's finances, government estimates and trends in the national economy. Parliamentary and legislative committees are the principal bodies of government oversight and should benefit from additional independent and authoritative advice on financial and economic matters. As such, the enabling legislation also provides the PBO with a mandate to provide analytical support to any committee

during its consideration of the estimates, as well as provide advice to any member of Parliament regarding the financial costs of their proposals.

The mandate of the Parliamentary Budget Officer includes providing objective analysis to the Senate and House of Commons concerning the state of the nation's finances and trends in the national economy; undertaking economic and fiscal research for the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts or the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance on the request of these committees; and estimating the financial cost of proposals currently or prospectively under consideration in either House when requested to do so by a member of the committee, the Senate, the House of Commons or a committee of both Houses. The act also requires that departments and agencies provide the officer with the necessary data to fulfill his or her mandate.

The reason this is important is that all democracies need to develop a process by which elected officials can approve the nation's budget and examine government spending plans. In Canada and in Ontario, Parliament and the Legislature vote on all appropriations requested by the government throughout its budget and estimates proposals. Parliamentarians generally approve the appropriations requested by the government. This is the central role of the estimates committee. Parliamentary and legislative committees do not, unfortunately, currently have the capacity to forecast the impact of budgets, to cost out new program proposals or to identify savings from the elimination of existing programs. All debate on government budgets and spending plans must rely on the data provided by the government. This information, particularly the forecasts, is provided by the Ministry of Finance. In other words, to properly assess the budgets, parliamentarians must have access to reliable data on the economy and on the effects of numerous government programs. In our opinion, this can best be done in Ontario by an independent legislative officer patterned after the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I want to also address the few broad items related to the budget. New Democrats are profoundly disappointed in this budget. It's a budget that misses the mark in so many ways. For the hundreds of thousands of women and men who have lost their jobs and the many more who are a pink slip away, this budget has made their lives even harder. Ontarians were looking for a budget that delivered real hope, one that would address the short-term job crisis while laying the foundation of long-term economic prosperity. Instead of a bold vision in tough times, the women and men of this province got an 8% tax hike on basic purchases as part of the massive overhaul of the province's tax structure. That's simply not what Ontarians were looking for in this budget. They were looking for relief. Instead, they got a tax hike. Budgets are about priorities. It is clear that the McGuinty government's priorities are miles apart from those of worried families. For those and other reasons, I will outline why the New Democratic Party will be voting against this budget.

HST and corporate tax cuts: The first issue I want to speak to is the proposed harmonized tax. Let it be clear, there's nothing harmonious about this tax. The new tax hike will tack on 8% to more goods and services than previously expected—8% more for everyday purchases. Filling up a car or a van on the way to work, 8% more; paying the monthly electricity and home heating bills, 8% more; buying a cheap pair of shoes, 8% more; the newspapers and magazines you like to read, 8% more; having your hair cut, 8% more; paying the Internet bill, 8% more; buying prepared foods under \$4, like the morning coffee or a doughnut at the local Tim Hortons, 8% more; and for new homes over \$400,000, 2% more. That's \$7,000 on a home worth \$350,000. These tax increases are permanent. They will be felt immediately, long after the Dalton dollars are handed out.

With joblessness rising and people settling for lower pay, family incomes aren't rising. The tax hikes will have a real, measurable impact on families already under strained budgets. At the pump, this tax grab will add seven cents to an 85-cent-a-litre fill-up. But when gas prices jump to \$1.35, like they did not too long ago and will again, the tax will add 10 cents to a litre.

We're not talking about nickels and dimes here. The average household spends \$2,000 on gas and \$2,000 to heat the home and pay for electricity, an immediate \$320 out of the pockets of struggling families—\$320 out of their pockets. When all the extra costs of day-to-day purchases are factored in, we're talking about a lot more. It's a lot more for families to struggle with.

The McGuinty Liberals are claiming that companies will lower their prices as a result of significant cost savings. After all, between big corporate tax breaks and the end of sales tax on inputs, corporations are the big winners. So will gas suddenly get cheaper? Will oil and gas companies really pass on their savings in lower prices? I doubt it. What about home heating and electricity bills? I doubt it. Will Enbridge or Thunder Bay Hydro or Hydro Ottawa or Union Gas drop their rates to offset the 8% increase? That remains to be seen, but I doubt it. Will Tim Hortons bring down coffee and muffin prices? I don't think so. Will Ontario homebuilders take \$7,000 off the price of their homes? I don't think the builders will do that. I think they'll pass on the cost to the consumer.

Nobody in Ontario believes this. I don't know who the government thinks they're fooling, but nobody is going to buy this. Politicians have tried to pitch them this theory before. They call it trickle-down economics—that's right—the old theory that says corporate tax cuts eventually create jobs. We know it doesn't work. Never has, never will. For a recent case study, we don't have to look much further than our friends down in the United States. Years of slashing corporate taxes have gone hand in hand with deregulation. The result is millions of families losing their jobs, savings and homes.

Thursday's budget couldn't have been clearer about this government's commitment to trickle-down economics. They're giving \$4.5 billion in corporate income tax cuts

over the next three years. Frankly, that's obscene. It's obscene because corporation tax is a tax on corporate profits, and the companies that need help in this brutal recession are not the companies making profits right now. Secondly, this is the same budget that took \$2.3 billion out of the pockets of hard-pressed consumers. In other words, \$2.3 billion is being shovelled out the door to exactly the wrong companies at exactly the wrong time.

This government could have chosen the side of ordinary Ontarians by tabling a bold new jobs plan for Ontario. It didn't. In the midst of what is perhaps the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, Ontario should be very worried. There are struggling companies out there in real need. They are losing money, laying off workers, and cutting hours, wages and benefits. They won't benefit from corporate income tax cuts—you have to make it to cut it—and that's not going to help stem the worries and frustrations of the people who work for these companies.

1610

I wonder how Premier McGuinty came to support sales tax harmonization. Interesting. After all, it was only in November 2008 that the Premier and his finance minister rejected the HST recommendation made by the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. In fact, when the report came out, the Premier worried about the impact of the HST on families, not only from our treasury perspective but from the perspective of consumers. Some things like children's snowsuits, home heating fuel, and other things like that which are really important to consumers would go up in cost. The Premier was very worried about that. Hmm. Funny how times change. Minister Duncan added that it wasn't the time to "tinker" with the province's tax regime. He's tinkering with it, all right. It's really going to be fun to watch this unfold.

Less than six months later, and deeper into this economic crisis, the government is proposing full-scale sales tax harmonization. That's like a 180, I guess; I don't know. The McGuinty government has gone from cautious to callous. Budget 2009 put big corporate tax giveaways ahead of a jobs strategy and basic workplace protections, to the point where most of the people where I used to work are not working any more, and now we're getting hammered with 8% more. When you're unemployed, collecting EI, boy, I don't know how much more devastating it can get. This government has struck, in our opinion, a backroom deal with the federal Conservative government, and in doing so, Premier McGuinty has taken a page right out of Stephen Harper's ideological playbook.

Jobs: This budget offered the government a chance to make a smart and sound investment to guarantee long-term job growth. Again, it missed the mark. New Democrats believe that the key to any smart, long-term strategy is investing strategically to secure Ontario's future industrial capacity. This government has chosen the easy way out by shovelling hard-earned taxpayers' money out the

door without ensuring that the long-term jobs of the future will be created right here in Ontario. New Democrats support infrastructure spending, but we want the companies to stay here to make the product and give our people work.

If this government were serious about positioning Ontario's economy for the future, they would have brought forward a buy-Ontario policy with real teeth in it. I'll give you an example. New Democrats are strong supporters of spending on public transit, but that spending should create real, long-term jobs right here in Ontario. We've called for a buy-Ontario requirement that 50% of the value of all transit vehicles purchased in Ontario be made in Ontario. Similar provisions exist in the US and Quebec. It's okay for them; it's okay in Quebec. Why isn't it okay in Ontario? This province can be a global leader in manufacturing cutting-edge transit vehicles. We have the skilled workforce, one of the best in the world. We have the people, the expertise. We have the transit. We have the trains and we have the boats to deliver a good product, and always did, until the erosion of our base industries, which is happening federally and provincially. We don't own anything anymore. Everybody else in the world owns Ontario and Canada. That's why we're in a fix. We have no control over our own destiny, over our own economics. We do not control our base industries. But if the subway cars and streetcars are manufactured in Thunder Bay, and buses in Mississauga, that will help put some people to work—and not 25%, but 100%. I saw buses delivered in Halifax harbour for the TTC, made in Korea—fully assembled, parts, everything, sitting on the Halifax dock. You wonder why our people are out of work? That might be one reason.

New Democrats are strong supporters of spending on roads, bridges and sewers, but where are we buying the steel? Is the steel being manufactured in Hamilton? They say it is. The steel mills are closed; they're closing. They are not producing steel for bridges and sewers and roads. Where are they buying the steel? Some steel that came into the States—there's a big uproar in the States right now—came from China, Brazil. The American Steelworkers are in an uproar. There's going to be a big protest next week.

They're talking about saving jobs in North America? You're importing all the base industry stuff from overseas. Why can we not compete? Because they can pay their people 50 cents an hour to make it, where a welder here might have to make \$20 an hour. It's all about profits. It's not about the people; it's all about profit. The steel that goes into these projects needs to be from Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie. That's where it has to come from, not offshore.

There was an opportunity in this budget to turn Ontario into a green energy technology leader. But nowhere in this budget is there a hard requirement—we're not asking for 100%; we want 60% of the content of new wind farms and solar projects to be manufactured in Ontario. In Ohio there was a parts plant, a huge one, that shut down. They transferred the plant, retrofitted the

plant, and guess what they make? They were months and years ahead of us: windmills, windmill structures. Quebec, another story, has just such a requirement, and as a result, they are Canada's leader in wind turbine production.

Here's an example of the human cost of not implementing an effective buy-Ontario program. Shannon is a 36-year-old mother of four as well as a stepmom of two other children. She lives in a small town in rural southwestern Ontario called Vittoria, on the north shore of Lake Erie. Shannon is a laid-off employee of US Steel Canada, where she earned a living for her family for the past 11 years. Like many Ontarians, Shannon is concerned about how she's going to provide for those children, one of which has special needs. "I am concerned about keeping a roof over my family's heads. I am concerned as to how I am going to keep my family intact both mentally and physically," said Shannon, in tears, in front of 1,500 people at the convention centre in Hamilton. "Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with all that is going on and cannot see how EI is going to cover my monthly expenditures." Shannon is looking to the government to institute a buy-Ontario program in infrastructure that would require that most, if not all, of the steel used in taxpayer-funded projects be made right here in Ontario. After all, we are paying the taxes; then the steel to keep the jobs should be Canadian to keep our people employed.

We're giving bailout money to international companies, and what do we get back? Layoffs, plant closures, parts plants closing all over the province. And what do they do? In a recession, you close your overseas operations, and that's exactly what's happening in Canada and has been for the last five years.

Years ago, we were in Ottawa lobbying for the steelworkers, warning the government, "Stop eroding our base industries. If you don't have control of your own economy, you don't have control of it. You're done." Well, here we are. In Shannon's view, this would help US Steel get her and other fellow laid-off steelworkers back to work. She would like some sense of security from the government that they won't let her family and all families in similar situations fall through the cracks.

Here's another good example: Dominic. Dominic has worked at the Thunder Bay Bombardier plant for 22 years as an assembly worker, a spot welder, an NC operator, a quality control inspector, and now as a machinist. Previously, he worked for seven years in the forest industry as a lumber scaler. Dominic feels that manufacturing, the key to Ontario's economy, is drying up at an alarming rate and fears that too many plants are being shut down at an expeditious rate. Once these industries shut down, it is very expensive to start them up again.

I can tell you from my experience, when you shut down a blast furnace, a critical part of the steel process, it takes months to get that thing running again. Meanwhile, people are on the street because it had to shut down because of no orders. Where are the orders going? Well, I got information the other day that US Steel—"No pro-

tectionism," they said. "Oh no, we're not going to punish the Canadians." Well, they just opened a blast furnace in Indiana that had been closed for five years. Why are they doing that? Because they're going to supply US buyers with American steel. Who's getting punished? Stelco, Algoma and Lake Erie Works. Can't people see this? It's right in front of them. I can't believe that both governments, federally and provincially, cannot see what's happening in our country, in our province. Until it knocks them on the head, they're not going to get it. We have no control over our own economy.

1620

Dominic feels that "Our ability to produce real goods would be gone, leaving us to the mercy of foreign"—well, isn't this interesting? Here's a guy, a layman on the floor, saying, "Our ability to produce real goods would be gone, leaving us to the mercy of foreign countries and corporations." Well, hello. Hello there. The guys on the floor get it, but the guys on this floor don't get it. "This is especially dangerous at a time of war or economic uncertainty," says Dominic. If Ontario had a real requirement that 50% of the value of transit vehicles were manufactured in Ontario, Dominic would feel a lot safer about his job, and a lot of people like Dominic.

Industrial assistance and accountability: Now I want to talk about another way in which this budget missed the mark. This budget could have demanded real accountability for taxpayer-funded assistance of ailing companies. There are close to \$3 billion allocated for distressed industries in this budget, but there is no indication that this government has learned the lessons of past industrial assistance programs and is willing to insist on real accountability.

We agree that the government has an important role to play in ensuring that our core manufacturing and resource sectors emerge from the present crisis in a healthy state—we all want that—but we also believe that companies must be held accountable for taxpayer monies that are being funnelled their way.

I can't emphasize enough the mismanagement of the Big Three in North America. That's why they're in the position they're in now—mismanagement. Hyundai, Toyota—all these other companies—Honda, yes, are feeling the pinch. I don't see too many layoffs at their plants. Why? Because they've got good management and they have contingency funds that they've set aside for times like this. But what do the Big Three do? They come back to the trough time and time again, and we keep shovelling out hundreds of millions of dollars to them with no accountability, no job protection and no good product to put out there. They should have been years ahead on these electric cars. They were way behind Toyota on that—bad management. This budget requires iron-clad job and investment guarantees. I don't see any of that in there—nothing. "Here's the money, fellas. You may want to squander a bit of it. There you go."

In order to ensure that these accountability measures are put in place, we need provisions for public and worker representation on management. We need the

people who make the product to sit on these boards—representation from the unions, representation from the government. These managers, these guys who are making hundreds of millions of dollars as CEOs, have to have some accountability, and they don't. That's what's going on in Canada, the United States and all over the world—CEOs running wild with public money.

Finally, we would require hard caps on executive compensation and companies receiving government aid. Some people complain about what professional athletes make—\$6 million to play hockey, \$12 million to play soccer, \$60 million, whatever—and you tell me that these executives are worth \$10 million, \$12 million? They make more than the President of the United States. They make way more than the Prime Minister of Canada. Who are these people? They set up their own budgets; they set up their own boards; they just milk, milk, milk, and we all sit back and watch it happen. “No regulations. Go ahead, fellas. Make as much as you want. It's a free market.” We require a cap on executives. We would like to see a cap in Canada of \$400,000 for executives. Gee, I wish I made \$400,000. I'd work for that company; no problem running it, if I could. It's just unbelievable.

Industrial strategy is next. I want to talk a little more about what could have been in the budget to create jobs. Since June 2004, almost 300,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs, and that doesn't include 18,000 direct jobs in the forest sector, which has decimated northern Ontario communities and resources. Every part of this province has been hit by job losses, from Chappleau to Windsor, from Kenora to Cornwall. Under the McGuinty Liberals, Ontario has lost more than 30% of its high-paying manufacturing jobs—\$13 billion in wages out of the Ontario economy. Unbelievable.

For the past five years, New Democrats have sounded the alarm. We've said it for years. Over the loss of manufacturing jobs, we've put forward constructive solutions, like a jobs commissioner. How would that work? A jobs commissioner overseeing companies, helping to decide whether this is good for Ontario, good for the province—input to these companies when they're making bad corporate decisions. And believe me, I've been in companies where they've made bad corporate decisions. They've squandered millions, even in the 1970s and 1980s, on bad investments. That should be overseen. There should be accountability, and there isn't.

These are good ideas, but once again they fall on deaf ears. We put bills forward, they get to committee, and the Liberals don't even read them. They don't even deal with it—Bill 6. Jeez, everyone is losing their compensation, they're losing their severance packages; I brought that forward in December 2007, and it's still sitting on the books. They never even read it. They don't even know about it. Unbelievable.

Mr. McGuinty has dithered during Ontario's manufacturing maelstrom, and bold action is needed if we are serious about sustaining good jobs and renewing our manufacturing sector. I want to be blunt. It's too darn easy to close down a plant in this province. Corporations

are being allowed to continue to pull up stakes far too easily.

I'll just give you a little example. I heard this week that US Steel, formerly Stelco, the proudest, strongest company, where my family put in 300 years' service, is now taking the raw materials, the iron ore and the coal off the ground, and boats are going back to the States. I heard some equipment may be going out of there. Where is it going? Hmm. They just opened a blast furnace in Indiana. I wonder if any of it's going there? Maybe. There's no protectionism going on. No, not a bit.

Dalton McGuinty says, “I don't want to have protectionism. I don't want to ruffle feathers. I don't want to upset the Americans. I don't want to upset anyone else.” They're sucking us dry, but we don't want to upset them. We don't want to stand up. “Do whatever you want, fellas. We'll take it on the chin. Canadians will take it on the chin again.”

In this budget, the government had an opportunity to reassure these Ontarians that a lifetime of blood, sweat and tears for a company would count for something. Now they're worried about their pension. They're worried about their pension plans—and they should be. You spend 35 years in a hole, working for a company making steel, just so maybe you'll get five or six years if you don't die of cancer in between. You might get six years at the end to maybe enjoy yourself and give your family some sense of security. Well, they're pulling that rug out, too. It's absolutely disgusting, while governments sit around and watch, doing nothing.

Anyway, this government had a chance to ensure that every last penny of back wages, vacation pay, severance pay and pensions would be paid out before companies run south to the border—Bill 6. They didn't even address it; didn't even want to look at it. Well, there's a lot of people who would like to see that bill now. But I looked in vain in the small print of this budget for any indication that the government would establish a wage protection fund that would protect wages. I didn't see it. There's nothing there, nothing for pensions, nothing to protect people. It's going to get worse. It's not going to get better.

I looked in vain for some sign that the government would make amendments to the Employment Standards Act that would force companies to sit down with workers and government to explore alternatives to a plant closure. These things simply are nowhere to be seen in this budget. Shame on the government for not protecting people's wages, their severances that they worked a lifetime for, and for not having accountability of these companies that are running south and running back to other countries and taking equipment out of Canada, taking the raw material out of Canada. What's going on? In closing, once again workers are left holding the bag. It's a sorry state of affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Research and Innovation.

1630

Hon. John Wilkinson: I seek unanimous consent to revert to motions in order to put forward a motion with-

out notice regarding Bill 147 and the order of business on the morning of Thursday, April 9, 2009.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The minister has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have consent?

Interjections: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on opposition day motion number 2, tabled by Mr. Runciman.

We are living through some very tough economic times at the moment. A lot of people across this province, across this country and globally are losing their jobs. Their livelihoods are being put in jeopardy. But this phenomenon is not just taking place in Ontario. It is bigger than Ontario. It is, in fact, bigger than Canada.

Sometimes when I hear the debate which takes place in this House about the economy, it almost gives the impression that somehow Ontario is unique in the kinds of things taking place in this province in terms of job losses and families being jeopardized. I think it sends a very erroneous message to Ontarians that we sort of live in a bubble in suffering these things. We know it's far from the truth. What is happening in Ontario is the consequence of what's happening in Canada and what's taking place more globally.

I had the opportunity to look at the most recent OECD economic outlook report, which was issued in March 2009. The OECD notes: "The world economy is in the midst of its deepest and most synchronized recession in our lifetimes, caused by a global financial crisis and deepened by a collapse in world trade. Tight financial conditions and low confidence are weighing on output and employment in OECD and non-OECD countries alike. In turn, shrinking activity and income is further undermining bank balance sheets, magnifying the downturn."

It goes on to say: "Bearing these uncertainties in mind, we anticipate that the ongoing contraction in economic activity will worsen this year, before a policy-induced recovery gradually builds momentum through 2010. In the United States, Japan, the euro area, as well as for the OECD economy at large, output will drop by between 4% and 7% this year and broadly stagnate next year. The major non-OECD economies are not spared from an abrupt slowdown in growth or an outright recession. World real GDP growth is projected to fall by 2¾ per cent this year and to recover by 1¼ per cent in 2010."

Similarly, the Group of Twenty, whose leaders met very recently in London to take stock of what's happening in the economy and come up with steps to rectify it, noted in a report in February of this year: "The global economy is in the midst of a deep downturn, as severe financial market stress persists notwithstanding continued policy efforts. World trade and industrial activity are falling sharply, while labour markets are weakening at a rapid pace, particularly in the United States. The advanced economies as a group are facing their sharpest

contraction in the post-war era, while activity is slowing abruptly in emerging economies."

Once again, this very clearly outlines that this economic downturn is a global phenomenon. Of course, we in Ontario, being part of the global economic order, are not immune to what is taking place. In fact, we have seen, pretty much across the country, significant deficits being incurred. This year, the federal government alone announced that they will be facing a \$1.1-billion deficit in 2008-09, which will rise to \$33.7 billion in the next fiscal year.

I can go through some other provinces. Newfoundland is estimating a deficit of \$750 million; New Brunswick, \$741 million; Quebec, \$3.9 billion. Alberta, which was the economy everybody looked towards in terms of growth, is forecasting a deficit of \$4.7 billion. And British Columbia has also gone from a \$50-million surplus to a \$495-million deficit.

So there's a phenomenon which is going on, and Ontario, along with other provinces and the federal government, has to work to combat it to make sure that we, when this global recession is over, come back in terms of our recovery stronger than before. We need to make sure that we put in our economy the competitive fundamentals which will help foster the growth of this province and, in turn, help our citizens, Ontarians and our families, to grow at the same time, because that is what lies at the heart. We want our economy to do better so that every one of us who lives in this economy also prospers. One is not exclusive of the other; they go hand in hand, very much so.

That is why countries around the world, including subnational governments like Ontario, have undertaken certain measures to stimulate the economy. One of the prescriptions which has been given by those who know these matters better than probably all of us combined here as legislators is that we need to inject a significant stimulus package. I was very interested to read, in terms of fiscal stimulus for the upcoming fiscal year, the amounts in G20 countries: the United States, \$787 billion; Argentina, \$30 billion; Britain, \$28 billion; France, \$33 billion; China, a \$585-billion stimulus package; Germany, \$102 billion; Japan is injecting \$123 billion. The list goes on and on, again demonstrating that this is a phenomenon not limited to Ontario. This is a phenomenon beyond Ontario.

One of the aspects of this motion speaks about quarterly reporting. I believe the opposition day motion asked for reporting five days before the end of each sitting. I don't understand why that type of reporting is required when we have, inherent in our system, measures of accountability already in place through the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, FTAA, which requires that Ontario economic accounts be released 45 days following Statistics Canada's release of the national income and expenditure accounts, which are released up to 60 days after the reference period.

Ontario Economic Accounts, for those who don't know, is a public document released four times a year

which provides an overall assessment of the current stage of the Ontario economy. It is posted on the Ministry of Finance website and can be found at www.fin.gov.on.ca. It's a public document which is, by law, required to be shared with this House, and of course that will continue to happen on a quarterly basis, giving ample opportunity for all members of this Legislature to put government to account, to make sure that they can review as to how government is investing in Ontario and how they are undertaking the expenditures.

On that note, I would urge the members of this Legislature to vote against this motion, as I strongly feel it's not required. We already have, through legislation, principles in place that require quarterly reporting by the government, giving ample opportunity to members of the opposition and governing members of this Legislature to hold government to account as to the expenditures.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: In addressing this opposition day motion, I wish to also stress the importance of ensuring, during these times of deficit spending, that taxpayers' tax dollars are not being misappropriated or frittered away. Without proper accounting measures, I fear that this budget could open up the spectre of the pork barrel.

I'm concerned about scenarios. Perhaps some Toronto MPPs may have fears about re-election. They lobby Mr. McGuinty. They're duly gifted billions of dollars for, for example, a high-speed rail line between Toronto and the airport. I do recall the pork-barrel proposal for a high-speed rail line from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. So the question: Would a Las Vegas rail line or a Toronto airport rail line get the steel mills open, could these projects be considered pork-barrelling, and how would that compare to the opposition proposal of a tax holiday for vehicle sales increase, which we have evidence would increase sales and increase steel production?

1640

Looking at our motion, we wish to have disclosed the name of the project, as far as any so-called stimulus spending, the nature of the project, the provincial electoral district in which it's located, the amount of provincial funding, other funding partners, the amount of their contribution, and the department and program in which the provincial funding is being provided. In other words, we need assurances, we need accountability.

I can tell you that US Steel workers in my riding need those assurances and that accountability as they stare down the barrel of the largest layoff of local steelmakers in history; 1,500 people are out of work. We wonder how they are going to be stimulated by this budget. Are there dollars to save jobs at the Hamilton and Lake Erie works? I don't see anything in the budget or in this deficit—so-called stimulus—funding.

So we have to be clear; we have to be transparent. We need this accounting; we need to know where all those taxpayers' dollars are being spent and what it will mean to those who are now looking for work. If we don't have that kind of accounting and those kinds of assurances, we

become subject to the same regrettable pork-barrelling scenarios we hear of so often south of the border. I think of the Bridge to Nowhere—I think that's in Alaska—the Big Dig in Boston, a \$4-billion-a-mile cost to put an interstate underground.

For those who may not be aware, "pork barrel" is a derogatory term referring to the appropriation of government spending for localized projects secured solely or primarily to bring money to that representative's area. The phrase originated, I understand, as a pre-Civil War practice of giving slaves a barrel of salt pork as a reward and requiring them to compete among themselves for the handout. Pork-barrel politics usually refers to spending intended to benefit the constituents of a politician in return for political support, perhaps for campaign contributions and, at minimum, for votes. So, typically, pork involves funding for government programs whose economic or other benefits are concentrated in a particular area but the costs are spread among all taxpayers. Would the \$9-billion GTA transit proposal fall into that category?

I have little doubt after this past budget day, when the McGuinty government's plan, entitled *Confronting the Challenge*, was introduced, that we'll long remember it as the day when political euphemism triggered economic disaster. There are no words available to express fully what I consider the irresponsibility of this directionless political spending. This government seems to be lost at its helm. I'm not sure who's at the tiller. While pork-barrelling in times of prosperity is foolish and negligent at best, to continue to pork-barrel in times of economic crisis, like we've seen over the past year, I find unforgivable.

I ask this government to do the right thing: Ensure that we don't fall into the pork-barrel trap, and ensure that accountability for taxpayers' dollars is there. I ask you to support this opposition motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was looking forward to standing and speaking to this Liberal motion—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —no, no, it's a Liberal motion—first brought forward by the federal Liberal caucus in order to keep the federal government accountable for their expenditures. I'm sure we're going to get unanimous support for this particular opposition day motion, because being a good Liberal motion from the House of Commons, put forward by Mr. Ignatieff, I'm sure the provincial Liberals are going to follow suit with their federal counterpart in Ottawa. So I look forward to the vote a little bit later this afternoon and maybe to seeing one of the few times in this place that all the opposition parties along with the government are on side on an opposition day motion. I very much look forward to the support the provincial Liberals will give to what is essentially a federal Liberal motion to keep the provincial government accountable here.

So I want to say congratulations in advance to the Liberal caucus for seeing fit to support Mr. Ignatieff in

his bid to keep the federal government accountable by having regular reporting back of what's going on with the economy and the budget. We're going to be doing that here as well, and I want to congratulate the Conservative caucus for reminding the provincial Liberals of that wonderful Liberal motion that was put forward by Mr. Ignatieff. I'm looking forward to the provincial Liberals supporting what is essentially a federal Liberal motion that was brought first to the House. That's quite an interesting twist of politics, I want to say.

I think there's a fair amount to be said for the need for accountability, especially in this day and age, because what we're seeing is really unprecedented. We have never seen in the history of this country, even during the worst of the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the type of intervention that we're now getting requested by the private sector to government. We're seeing the auto sector, we're seeing the steel sector, we're seeing every sector of the economy coming before government and saying, "We need you to help us out." God, you've got George Bush, former President of the United States out there trying to nationalize the American banking institution, bailing those guys out.

My point is there is a huge shift here in regard to the role that government is being asked to play, and that's really my point. We're being asked as governments, both federal and provincial, to intervene in what normally have been private sector activities, something that they've resisted for many years. If you listen to the captains of industry, God, eight, nine, 10 months ago, if there had been some kind of suggestion that the provincial or federal governments intercede into the affairs of the automotive sector or the financial sector, they would have been apoplectic; they would have been swinging by the chandeliers. But here they are coming before us and asking us, as provincial and federal governments, to help them—and rightly so.

I think we have a role to play. I think it's only fitting that we have some mechanism in order to have greater transparency to whatever deals are made between the provincial government and industry. I think the public wants that; I think the public wants to know. They say, "Yes, we're really worried about what's happening in the economy." We hear the captains of industry, those underpaid darlings of the corporate world who don't get paid very much in bonuses and don't get paid very much in large wages every year, coming to government and asking for yet more money in order to bail them out after they've done such a wonderful job of managing their own companies. We take a look at companies like AIG that have done such a wonderful job of running themselves into the ground, and now they're asking governments to bail them out.

So I think the public, rightfully so, is saying, "Listen, we would like to have a little bit of transparency here." We want to have an ability where if government is going to move in and help some of these large corporations that have driven themselves into debt and driven themselves into the ground and are asking for us to bail them out—

the public, the person who is at the end paying for this, the taxpayer, wants to have some sort of transparency in regard to whatever decisions are made so that we can measure, is the money that we're lending to industry, is the money that we're giving to industry in some cases, money well spent? And is there something more important that could be learned? I think this is really the point. The public is saying, "Okay, we don't like this but we understand it." But if we can measure what's going on as far as the assistance that we're providing the private sector in this time of need, is there something to be learned about what's worked and what hasn't worked when it come to those investments that we've made from the provincial government into those industries? Because I'm sure there are going to be some examples where we're going to be able to say, "Job well done. It is having a positive effect on the economy."

But there are some that are going to be a problem. Look at President Obama, how he apparently got caught offside when it came to some of the deals that were made with the banking sector, where they went into insurance companies and others and bailed them out, and it turns out that these guys were paying themselves out bonuses, huge bonuses, by way of the taxpayer for the great job they did running their companies into the ground. The President found out: "Oh God, we've got a bit of a problem here and maybe we need a bit more transparency." So President Obama has kind of figured out that he got himself into a mess by having the legislation drafted the way they did out of the House and out of the Senate earlier this winter and that they need to have better transparency. I guess if we're going to get into the business of assisting the private sector in the way they're asking us to do so, I think it really is incumbent upon this Legislature to pass such an opposition day motion that says there will be greater transparency.

I look forward to the support that the provincial Liberals will give to essentially what was a federal Liberal idea that was born of Mr. Ignatieff when he asked for this standard to be applied to the federal Conservative government of Mr. Harper. Again, I congratulate the government head, because I know they will all stand in support of this motion, and I'm really looking forward to their genuine interest in supporting what Mr. Ignatieff is doing at the federal level.

1650

The other thing I want to say in this short time that I've got—and this is really the problem about opposition days: You don't get a lot of chance to talk in some detail about this and about some of the ideas. What's clearly related to this motion but outside of what we need to do in regards to assisting industry is that we really need to think through, as this Legislature, and not just allow ministers and the Premier, and staff of ministers and Premiers, to make all these decisions without the Legislature being involved—we really need to think through, are we getting a good bang for our buck when we start to invest our public dollars into some of these businesses that are asking for money?

What kind of conditions do we want to set when it comes to, "Okay, we're going to lend you money, or we're going to grant you money"? What conditions does this Legislature want to set as far as what we expect in return? For example, will there be provisions to protect, as much as humanly possible, the jobs of hard-working people who are going to be affected by the downturn of this economy? If we're going to lend money to these companies, what assurances do we get back that they're not going to throw a bunch of people out of work? We've seen that happen already in a whole bunch of companies across Ontario and Canada and in the United States, where government has lent money. GM is a good example in Oshawa, and has made huge layoffs and affected thousands of people when it comes to their jobs. What kind of conditions are we going to make on decisions that are made by corporate Canada or, should I say, foreign companies that own companies here in Canada?

There's really a growing sense that we're losing control of our own economy by way of the multinationals that have moved in and have taken over many of what used to be the crown jewels of Canadian corporations. I come out of northern Ontario where companies like Noranda, Inco, Falconbridge and others were huge Canadian mining companies that were born in Canada, that grew in Canada, that became mining experts not only here in Canada but the world over. They have now been taken over by foreign companies by way of what's happened with corporate takeovers. What's happening is that we're losing much of our own ability to make decisions about what's going to happen in our communities when it comes to the methods of mining, how quickly we are going to mine out ore bodies, what kind of decisions are going to be made about sourcing materials and sourcing purchases so that we make sure that there's a local spinoff for Ontario when it comes to the decisions made by those companies.

If we're going to go out and start assisting these corporations, we need to know where you are going to be sourcing materials and supplies for your companies. Are you going to be doing that in Ontario? What assurances do we have that that can happen? To what degree are you going to make sure that decisions that are made about how you operate in Ontario are not going to negatively affect our environment, are not going to negatively affect the communities that you live in and, more importantly, the workers?

I think it's important that you have some method of transparency in the decision-making process. I think the motion is an interesting one in that it takes from an idea that came out of the federal House of Commons, where the Liberals there have decided to have some sort of opportunity to take a look at the decisions of the government on a regular basis and that it be done by the House itself—not by ministers only and not just by the Premier, but by the elected officials, duly elected by the people of Ontario to make these decisions. I think that's an interesting approach.

I look forward to the rest of the debate. I know that the Liberal members will be standing in unison speaking in

favour of this motion. I know they'll be standing in favour of this motion when it comes to the vote, and I very much look forward to that probably very unique situation where we're going to see an opposition motion supported by all three parties in this House. That would be a really unique start in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm confident that I, at this moment, should seek unanimous consent to revert to motions in order to put forward a motion without notice regarding Bill 147 and the order of business on the morning of Thursday, April 9, 2009, to be considered.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Wilkinson has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have consent? We have consent.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want you to know we're all delighted by that.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Wilkinson: I move that on Thursday, April 9, 2009, notwithstanding standing order 8(a), the House shall continue to meet past 10:15 a.m. for the purpose of conducting the following business commencing at that time:

(1) Introduction of visitors;

(2) Consideration of the following motion: that the order of the House dated March 5, 2009, referring Bill 147, An Act to proclaim Holodomor Memorial Day, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged and the bill ordered for third reading;

(3) Upon passage of the preceding motion, the order for third reading of Bill 147 shall immediately be called and the question put forthwith without debate or amendment; and

(4) Proceed directly to oral questions or recess to 10:30 a.m., as the case may be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is the House familiar with the motion? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY (CONTINUED)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C'est un plaisir de pouvoir participer à ce débat.

I must say the purpose of the debate is to properly inform the people, the Ontarians. Yes, I say "properly inform." So many people are misinformed at the present time; they are confused because they're watching the debate. I wish everyone in this House would read this budget carefully. The opposition has the right to question, and I fully respect that, but we have to be honest with Ontarians.

I was listening to the PC motion, which we will not support—I'm saying we will not support it—but I was very surprised to hear that we got a new friend on our side. Why am I saying this? It's because the leader of the official opposition said that the projects that were put forward this past year and this year were given to friends. Well, I have to say, the member for Leeds–Grenville must be a great friend of the Liberals, because he's the one who got the largest amount of money, on February 13, for the Build Canada project. So he became a friend of the Liberals. I know he's got a super EA in the former mayor of Brockville, Steve Clark, and before that, he had a great friend of mine, Don Swayne, who has passed away, and I regret to see him gone, because he was a great man for the riding of Leeds–Grenville.

This budget is one of the best budgets that we have ever had here for many years, because I think every one of us should know that we are facing a recession—not only Ontario; it's a global recession. We have to be ready, and when we are in a recession, we have to plan for the future. This is exactly what the Premier has done for the province of Ontario. We have created programs, \$32.5 billion worth of infrastructure programs, for the province of Ontario. Why? Because during a recession, you take the benefit of that and you create jobs. This is why we are doing that.

When people are saying, "It's going to cost a fortune"—I was listening to the radio station in Ottawa a week ago last Friday and also a week ago this last Monday, and I couldn't believe the people calling in to the radio station. The same day, when I came here in the afternoon, the same questions were asked. But the people, I have to say, on the radio were misinformed—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Those are your constituents.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: No, they're not. They're not my constituents. They were misinformed. They were telling the people, "Yes, you will now be paying 8% on your prescriptions"—not true at all; "You're going to pay 8% when you rent or buy a wheelchair"—not true at all; "You are going to pay to get your house built"—not true at all up to \$400,000. So I think that was misleading.

A gentleman called and said, "I will now be paying \$858 of taxes in the next year." A person called right back and he said, "This gentleman who said he's going to pay \$858 never said that he's going to get \$1,000 at the end of the year"—three instalments of \$333. He never said that. He's going to benefit about \$142 in the year. I think it's very good.

1700

Besides that, 93% of the Ontario population is going to be benefiting from this budget. Out of this, the people of Ontario will benefit from a tax reduction of 16.5% as of July 2010.

One thing: When we get the call from the real estate people—I guess every one of us must have got the e-mail. Please, please inform the people properly. Right now, the McGuinty government is helping out all those real estate people. Why? Because, right now, we have a program. We are creating jobs that will give them the

opportunity to continue selling homes, because when we're out of the recession, they will continue after, and they should be happy about that because we are creating jobs. That 8% on some of the services will not apply before July 1, 2010. People right now think they'll be paying that 8% immediately. That is not true.

Besides this, anybody who will qualify will get up to \$260 per head in the family. If you have three children, that's \$260 times three, plus the father and the mother; that's multiplied by five. They will get that. So, really, that is a benefit to them.

We could have turned around and done the same thing as the previous government did, especially in 1998. I remember that I was sitting on the other side, and a member came to me and said, "Jean-Marc, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm figuring out how much money my county of Prescott and Russell will lose from this downloading that they have done." They didn't increase the tax; they reduced the tax, and then they cut services. They downloaded services like social housing. One hundred per cent of social housing was transferred to the municipalities—100%. The assessment that was done by the province: Downloaded this to the municipality, and in turn, they got MPAC to do it.

The McGuinty government will not cut services to the people of Ontario. We will continue giving them the proper services they deserve. We will not cut meat inspectors. We will not cut water inspectors. We will not cut teachers. We will not cut nurses.

Also, a very important point: I'll never forget that when they closed hospitals, they were saying they were going to close the Montfort Hospital. We had to fight like crazy to keep that open. Today, it's one of the best hospitals we have in Ottawa.

They downloaded a good percentage of costs to the municipality: downloaded public health, downloaded to my area the police services, which is costing us \$7.8 million right now.

Agriculture tax: In the past, the agriculture people were paying 100% to the municipality and then collecting 75% from the province. They cut all that down. Now it's every resident of a municipality who has to pay that 75%.

So I think we did pretty good. We said we would not cut services, and we are not cutting services; we are adding services for the people of Ontario.

I could go on and on. The provincial highway that was downloaded to the municipalities: In eastern Ontario, 40% of provincial roads were downloaded to municipalities—40% of the provincial roads.

The budget is very clear, also, that we will continue with the eastern Ontario development fund. Up to now, this year, with the program only running for eight months, we have distributed over \$7 million to different manufacturers to create jobs, to retain jobs or to retrain for the jobs.

Just last Friday, I was with my dear friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to give a good cheque, really, from EODF to a company called KI Pembroke,

which employs more than 200 people. I would like to make sure that the third party is aware of this: Whatever they manufacture there, with more than 200 employees, 80% of their product is exported to the States.

This budget responds to the needs of seniors, to the needs of people in the education sector, to the needs of people in the health sector. And don't forget OMAFRA, the agriculture sector: Everything is there for them. We are going to invest over \$1 million more this year to make rural summer jobs available and we will employ over 100,000 students who will be working on the farms in the rural sector.

I think I've covered my time. I thank you, everyone. And, again, we will not be able to support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on government accountability.

Our leader illustrated very well the lack of accountability and transparency in this government's management of its finances. He provided this House with a number of good suggestions as to how the government could make itself more accountable to the Legislature and ultimately to the people of Ontario.

If the government wanted to make itself more transparent and accountable to the voters, I have a few ideas about how it could do so.

The first one: Stop making repeated reannouncements of every policy you want to bring forward. I think the best example of this is the government's repeated announcement over the last few years of the 1,000 new police officers. The government announced this again and again for years. The latest is the government's transit plans, reannounced again and again.

Infrastructure plans are another great example. We constantly hear these announcements extending out years into the future, all because the government is more interested in the headline it will get than the actual results.

Number 2: Why won't this government tell us and the people of Ontario when it is actually spending money? We have no idea at which point in the year—July, September, or January—the money will actually be spent. The important thing here is that neither do the agencies. Often agencies will listen and hear in the budget of a particular budget year that there is money being allocated. Well, they have no timeline in terms of planning, because they will not know at that point when the money is actually going to flow. And so, very often there's a huge level of frustration for agencies and transfer agencies of the government.

Too often this government announces spending and then delays and delays before it gets around to spending the money. A good example of this is the dental care for low-income Ontarians. Community health centres came to Queen's Park on March 11 to tell you they are still waiting after a year. Here's an example of the point I just made, in the fact that that was an announcement in the 2007-08 budget. The press conference was held March 11, because obviously we were coming to the end of the

budget year and still no money had flowed. Farmers in my riding also tell me that too often funding is available at times in the seasons of the year when they are unable to use it. Again, they would be willing to participate, but because the funding doesn't flow in a timely way, and because it's difficult for people to find out with any kind of certainty when that funding is going to flow, people aren't able to take advantage of those programs. Clearly, this is poor financial planning by the government.

1710

The budget also lists multiple items on which the government is planning to spend money over a number of years without telling us how much will be spent in a particular year. Again, it's extremely difficult for transfer agencies who might hear that there's going to be \$5 million for something over three years. There's no way for them to plan until the government releases that money, and it isn't always an equal amount divided over a given period of time, so there's a great deal of mystery and guesswork on the part of those who are trying to plan what is their core business when they are dependent on these announcements that simply do not give clear direction. The infrastructure example in the budget is a good example.

Another question I have is, what does "shovel-ready" mean? How do you define this term? Or do you just choose who gets the money the same way you hand out money at the end of the fiscal year? Should we even be giving money just to those projects that are furthest ahead in the approval process? Does planning matter?

Here's another idea. The government claims that the Green Energy Act will create 50,000 jobs. This is just another number chosen with no analysis to support it. In fact, we have repeatedly asked the government for the analysis when these claims are made. Are these part-time jobs? Are these full-time jobs? Do you do any analysis of the economic impact of your announcements? How many jobs will the changes in the Green Energy Act cost? Is there a net number of new jobs? We do not know the answers to these questions, because there is no analysis. These are numbers that appear to have been pulled out of the air.

A final point on this: You claimed in the budget that you wanted to reduce the regulatory burden by 25%. Is this 25% of the total number of regulations? Is it 25% of the total wordage of regulations? Is it 25% across all ministries? Will reducing the number or length of regulations translate into a 25% reduction in time time businesses must spend satisfying government bureaucrats, or is it a 25% reduction in the cost of production? We do not know, because again you have done no analysis. You have just created a number out of thin air.

Last week in this House, I quoted the auditor's reports and his repeated criticism of the government's end-of-year spending sprees. Billions of dollars go out the door at the end of the year with no plan and no accountability. This is indicative of the government's lack of planning. They are very good at making announcements and at gesture politics. I understand the desire to promote

themselves through public relations, but there is no substitute for a sound system of financial planning and budgeting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I am privileged and honoured to stand up and speak about this motion. Of course, I'm not going to support it. My colleagues spoke many different times before me and spoke about why we're not, as a government, supporting the motion.

It was interesting to hear my colleague from Timmins-James Bay talking about the fact that in difficult times all the parties should work together. I like this idea. I like this approach. I wish the opposition party would work with the government in this difficult time to find a solution, to find a way to get out of this mess which we are facing not just in the province of Ontario, but in Canada and in the world.

Basically, I listened to the opposition leader speak on why he's going to bring this motion against the government and against the budget, but I don't understand when he starts talking about what they did when they were in power. He himself was a part of the government that ran a deficit in good times; when we had a good economy; when we had productivity at the highest level; when they cut the support for nurses, teachers, hospitals; when they cut social assistance by 25%. They cut all the possible ways in order to get revenue, and their own deficit was almost \$5.2 billion.

It's important for all of us in difficult times to find a solution, to take leadership in many different areas. I know the people of Ontario are waiting for us to see how we can solve the problems: how we can support our auto industry, how we can support our infrastructure, how we can maintain the schools we have, how we can maintain our universities and colleges, how we can deal with the nurses, how we can deal with the shortage of doctors, how we can deal with health care, how we can deal with many different elements in our society, how we can deal with the poor people who live among us who are looking forward to seeing us supporting them and giving them the support they need. So this budget came at a difficult time. It came to speak about all of these elements which I mentioned before.

It's important for all of us in difficult times to keep investing in our community, and I believe that our finance minister, Premier Dalton McGuinty and our government decided to go this route, to invest and reinvest in the community, especially to stimulate the economy; to invest more than \$32 billion in our infrastructure; to invest in research innovations. Because we know exactly that the future is not going to be about traditional jobs, it's going to be about special jobs. It's going to be about technical jobs. Therefore, we continue in our direction in order to have a prosperous and brighter future for all the people who live in Ontario.

I was listening to my colleague Jean-Marc Lalonde speaking about why we chose that route, why the opposition is doing what they do, why they are playing

politics instead of coming together as a government, as a opposition with the third party, and working together to find a solution to this economic downfall in the province of Ontario. The people of this province are looking at us and waiting for us to work together. They have no time to have partisan divisions. They want to see how we're going to create jobs. They want to see the elected officials in this place working together in order to maintain our infrastructure, to create jobs for our people, to support the single mothers, to support orphaned people, to support our seniors who worked very hard to construct this province of Ontario.

I cannot say enough about my feelings about the opposition party because they have come in at a difficult time to play politics, to gain some votes here or there, but they haven't learned from the past. They do the same things. What happened to them? They lost the election. Not only that one time; they lost it twice, because they weren't straightforward with the people of Ontario. I think the most important thing is to come openly and talk about our economic situation, to talk about our position in this province and to talk about transparency.

I was shocked, because our government reports to the people of Ontario almost three times a year about our financial status in the province, and I heard the members opposite speaking about announcement after announcement. Yes, we're going to keep announcing our supports in education, health care, nursing, policing, safety and all of the elements which we need badly in the province of Ontario. I know this announcement has been announced once and has also been followed by financial support to make sure all these elements, all of these pillars in our community, are supported, because we're looking forward to getting through this difficult time, to a brighter future in the province of Ontario.

1720

I got the chance to go with the Minister of Research and Innovation to the University of Western Ontario to see how this institution is working hard to develop a method, a way to lead us and the next generation to a brighter future, a technological future, a scientific future.

All of these elements are important to us because the only way we can compete nationally and internationally is by investing in the future, by investing in our universities and colleges and research and innovation. This is the only way we can create some kind of way, some kind of method that's going to create a direction to take us from this level to another level, a brighter level we can depend on and that can take us to a solid and brighter future.

I have a lot to speak about, but I know many of my colleagues are anxious to speak against the motion brought by the opposition tonight. They are angry and upset because they want to see the government, the opposition and the third party working together to save our province, to save our country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to speak to this motion. A wise person once said, "If you don't know

where you're going, you won't know when you get there." Unfortunately, this budget is not a plan to meet the economic challenges of this province, and without a plan, we won't know when we get there and we may end up in a place that we don't want to be.

A constituent of mine said it so much better than I could, I guess. This is a letter from Sandy Falkiner of Cambridge, Ontario, to the Honourable George Smitherman, with copies to various other people, other ministers, municipal and regional councillors. It's dated April 3, 2003:

"After reading the article in today's Record, 'Smitherman Hints Cambridge May Have to Choose Between Hospital Expansion and New Theatre,' I felt compelled to write to you and ask the simple question, 'Why do we have to choose?'

"As a lifelong Cambridge resident, a long-time community activist and volunteer, and a long-time Liberal supporter at both the provincial and federal levels, I believe that I am fairly politically and socially aware of some of the needs and concerns of our community.

"The hospital expansion in Cambridge was promised many, many years ago. The members of our community and wider region raised millions of dollars to ensure that the future health and well-being of our citizens would be well looked after in the years to come.

"The Drayton theatre project has also been long in the making and, in my opinion, speaks well for the forward-thinking and creativity of our municipal, business and community leaders and is a grassroots economic stimulus project that will help provide employment, financial stability and access to the arts for not only our community but also for our neighbouring cities and townships.

"To have you suggest that our community must now 'choose' between these two projects is, quite frankly, insulting and, in my opinion, backs our community into a corner for which the only answer is, of course, to support the hospital. To do otherwise would be political and socioeconomic suicide, as you well know. I understand and am familiar with these kinds of tactics because I vote against the use of them every time I place an X beside a Liberal candidate at election time.

"The people of Cambridge earned the right to their hospital expansion years ago, and it is a promise that must be delivered on without any strings attached or underhanded, manipulative innuendos. As a Liberal supporter, I can only hope that you misspoke accidentally or were misunderstood and that you will immediately rectify the situation.

"As a Cambridge resident, I can only hope that you will ensure the future of Cambridge Memorial Hospital and, in addition, allow for an unbiased, no-strings-attached look at the Drayton project as a separate issue. To do otherwise is not in keeping with the integrity and the mandate of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

"I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of this letter to the ministers of other portfolios, as well as my local municipal and regional leaders in the hopes of in-

viting engaging and meaningful consultation and solutions regarding this matter.

"Sincerely."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me to get a few words on the record this afternoon about this opposition motion. I find it rather interesting, the content of this motion talking about transparency in government.

I remember those days very, very well back in 1998, as a city councillor in Peterborough, when the Who Does What review was announced. There was a big meeting of AMO in Ottawa. They brought in the Premier: a big speech that day. I remember being at the back of the room, and I started doing the calculation. We were told—and, Mr. Speaker, you'd understand this very well; you're a former mayor of Essex, Ontario—that this exercise of Who Does What would be revenue-neutral. Well, that was the biggest story ever told in the history of province of Ontario. There were some of my fellow councillors from Peterborough at the back of the room, and we started to do a quick calculation: "There is no way in heaven that that exercise could be revenue-neutral."

We were told, oh, this was going to be very transparent. As my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell indicated, 40% of the roads were downloaded in the province of Ontario. David Crombie, who commissioned a study when they were in government, certainly indicated to them that social housing should remain with the province of Ontario. In fact, income-redistribution measures were to stay with the province of Ontario. Many of us renamed the Who Does What exercise as the Who Got Done In committee. It was municipalities that got done in here in the province of Ontario.

Last October 31, under the direction of Minister Watson and the finance minister of the province of Ontario, we put into effect a framework over the next number of years to take a lot of those responsibilities back where they belong, to the province of Ontario and off the back of the local property taxpayer.

Indeed, I heard the member from Cambridge talk about his hospital. It's quite conceivable that the \$32 billion in investment over the next two years will certainly help the good citizens of Cambridge. I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to be in that fine community, and the residents there are certainly looking forward to that hospital.

We heard the member from Oxford today. That was a really interesting question during question period, and then he talked about his new hospital that's being built with the infrastructure dollars that we're investing in the province of Ontario. You can't have it both ways.

We have one of the candidates for the leadership, from Ajax–Whitby, who said in her opening remarks, "I recognize that this is a worldwide recession"—not a McQuinty recession, not a recession in the province of Ontario, but a worldwide recession that needs to be challenged.

This budget is going to do that, and I'm going to be proud to support it and vote against this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to remind members, just as we often—the previous speaker may be a little off track. He was talking about the municipal service review, in which they didn't upload anything. In fact, the biggest question, AMO's question, is, why didn't they upload social housing? It's a \$300-million deficit a year, and it's half federal money. I guess the member is not aware of the past.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He's confused.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. In fairness, I'm being charitable: "Forgive them, Lord; they know not what they do," kind of thing, it being Easter weekend.

I would only say this: Our leader, Bob Runciman, has moved with all compassion and concern on behalf of the people of Ontario. What he has done here is, he's pointed out some mechanisms of accountability, which is fair. It's really what Mr. Ignatieff has done in Ottawa, and most of the leaders, with Barack Obama, are calling on accountability mechanisms.

"Transparency": This is a very familiar Liberal word. It doesn't really mean anything except that you can see through it; it's transparent. Well, you can't see through this; it's smoke and mirrors.

However, the deal here is this: He's asking for regular auditable reports. What could be simpler? It's in public accounts already. It's like keeping your promise, which will be a new trend for the Liberals, because what he says here, if you promise to do this—right in the motion here it says to name the project and then to show the progress of the project. It seems fair to me. They're spending millions and billions of dollars, mostly borrowed—30-some billion dollars. We know they have a deficit, so it's all borrowed money. It's going to be shown as sort of like a big mortgage, and this troubles me, really.

1730

But if I go back to the purpose of this opposition day motion, we're saying that we want to follow the advice of the Auditor General, Mr. McCarter. He has said in the 2005 and subsequent reports that he has trouble with certain ministries. I know that the last time they had Lottogate, the scandal where Mike Colle had to resign. It wasn't Mike's fault; it was the government run awry, run amok, really, that started spending money like there was no tomorrow.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, people are mentioning the million dollars for the cricket club when they'd only asked for \$100,000. What's in a million? Really.

They say in here: "That the Legislative Assembly call on the McGuinty government"—it's very respectfully requested—"to amend Bill 162 to provide that the McGuinty government table reports in this House no later than five sitting days before the end of each of the sitting periods of the 2009-10 fiscal year." Now, what's so onerous about that? If you're not tracking it, why

aren't you? If you are tracking it, why not share it? That's not that complicated.

It says "to provide ongoing economic and fiscal updates." They already do that, the quarterly reports. Businesses do it. Just tell the people; that's all we're asking for. It isn't that onerous. In fact, I expect reasonable, thinking people on all sides of the House will support this because it doesn't have any jagged edges on it or any surprises. It's right here. It says "to detail the actual implementation of the budget." Not a problem—quarterly reports. The estimates committee can review this spending.

Item (c) here says "to itemize the actual effects of the budget with respect to the minimizing of existing job losses." Aren't we trying to spend money on infrastructure to create jobs? In fact, Bill 150, Mr. Smitherman's Green Energy Act, accounts that they're going to create thousands of jobs. Well, let's share the good news. I would hope there is good news, because some will be for my constituents who have been laid off in the auto sector. There are 300,000 families without an income.

They don't seem to care, but what they have done there in this bill—I'm getting off topic a bit. I am saying this: I heard the review today, done by chartered accountants, of the HST. This is the Dalton McGuinty new tax. It's hard for people to understand, but the young people here would understand it. What it means is that everything that you buy is going to cost 8% more. It's that simple. If you have a candy bar, or if you go to McDonald's—hopefully you don't because you've got to have better-quality food. An apple, for instance; an apple a day will cost you 8 cents more, I'm sure. It's like this for every single expenditure, especially seniors and people on fixed income. When they get on the bus, they're probably going to pay more. If they take a taxi, they're going to pay more. If they have somebody do their income taxes, they'll pay more.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Not for gas. You wouldn't pay more for gas, would you? Gasoline?

Mr. John O'Toole: Gasoline, exactly; home heating oil, cable television. This is an independent, third party professional report by chartered accountants; these are qualified, educated, independent, self-regulatory professional people. They say it's probably going to cost about \$2,000 per family a year. That's almost \$200 a month.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: We figured out, just by talking to people at Tim Hortons, that it's probably going to be \$25 to \$40 a week per individual. It's only a new tax. We're trying to find out a simple way for the people of Ontario to understand that you've just been clawed.

Our advice, basically, is to get a button on your pocket so they can't get at your wallet, and a hand in your pocket. We're going to run that ad, hand in your pocket, and we're going to have a picture of Dalton McGuinty walking around behind you with—now, I know sometimes governments need more money, but what's missing here is the accountability.

This is what Mr. McGuinty doesn't account for. Our leader, Bob Runciman, is really simply saying, "That

each such report shall automatically and immediately be posted on an accessible and interactive government website"—it's not us trying to smooth the numbers or crank the numbers—"and be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates and to the Auditor General." These are just transparency rules. We're not asking for much, but I do encourage people to consider voting for it because it's something each one of us should stand for. It's openness and accountability. I don't even think it's partisan. If I just take away that talk about the new tax—it's there, but we don't need to get aggressive about it and too belligerent. This budget is a huge whack in the pocketbook, I'll tell you.

I would like to stay on the high road here and say that the accountability thing is what troubles me.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I got carried away there a bit, but I'm getting back on the good track now. There's good track-bad track messaging.

But the fact is that I have the greatest respect for our House leader, Elizabeth Witmer. She has asked several questions of David McGuinty—David McGuinty, Freudian slip—David Caplan. David Caplan's mother, by the way, was the Minister of Health at one time. Do any of you know that? She was a good minister. She usually answered the questions. Minister Caplan isn't answering the questions. In fact, the media now are on this. They're on this story that this agency we had—it was called SSH; it almost had kind of a strange name—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, yes. The Minister of Transportation raises a very good question. And it was run so modestly. In fact, I was on that committee. I was appointed to that committee, and it was a proud moment in my life when I was given the privilege of being on that committee. Having worked as a programmer, as a systems person, in my life for quite a few years—actually, maybe before computers—

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I didn't know that.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. But here's the deal: The spending has gone through the roof. They brought it up; I didn't. I just brought up that health is a big part of the budget. About 50% of the budget is health care—and growing. In fact, the member for Cambridge's speech was about standing up for his hospital and the people in his community. What am I doing? What is the member for Sarnia-Lambton doing? They want to close the emergency in his hospital. In Cambridge, he has been fighting for years for that hospital. In my community last weekend, there was a big demonstration with thousands of people. What was it? They want to close the emergency. And they tell us in the House that there is no problem. If there's no problem—and now they're saying it's the LHINs, these local health integration networks. They're local, all right—they're bigger than most provinces—and they're integrated, meaning with the Liberal Party—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: To me, the LHINs are a shield for the minister; they're a shield so they can't get to David

Caplan. Look, it's a designed method so you can't get to the minister. But here is what has happened with the SSH, the Smart Systems for Health—and the Minister of Transportation said, and I have the highest regard for him, normally. Here's what has happened. In 2002-03, the expenses were \$82 million. That's a lot of money. They did connect up about 700 different health networks—pharmacies, doctors' offices, hospitals, integrated hospitals. So they did some work.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's a good thing.

Mr. John O'Toole: And the Minister of the Environment with the sludge bill, he's saying things too. Kingston has a lot of trouble with their hospitals. They're laying nurses off by the hundreds.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: No.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, and he's a minister.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Take that back.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speak to the press. Line it up, and I will.

The spending for Smart Systems for Health—let's stay on topic because this is a budget thing, serious stuff. In 2003-04, they spent \$82 million. Let's just move forward a few years here. In 2006-07, \$125 million; that's almost double the budget. And what have they done? They fired them all; exactly.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: No.

Mr. John O'Toole: They fired them all. If you look down into the detail—if people watching are interested, I'd be happy to send you these notes because we got them under freedom of information, and these have been independently proven by the ministry. They spent \$85,000 on food and expenses. You could buy a lot of sandwiches for \$85,000.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: A lot of pizza.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not sure there was any pizza. It sounds like filet mignon to me.

Travel expenses: half a million dollars. Where did they go? On a holiday? It was 17 times the previous—accommodation, \$85,000. Here's the really good one: Entertainment and catering was \$143,000. I'd like to find out some of the names of the people, because if they weren't eating the right kind of food, they'd all be overweight. There's a lot of food here. There's a lot of dieting needing to be going on right now. I hope there wasn't any alcohol on the bills. But usually what happens with these arm's-length agencies, you can't get the bills. They just sign the Visa bill and it doesn't itemize four bottles of wine at \$100 each. You don't see the detail. It worries me.

I'm going to roll this back to the budget. What worries me most is—we're asking for accountability. We don't want to see this stuff on the wine, the consultants and all that stuff. We know it went on. They won't answer it, but we know it. What is this? They cancelled it. They fired them all, actually. They must have fired them because they couldn't put up with the expenditures that were going on. I would suspect the minister did the right thing in this case by firing them, but I'm going to give him a bit of advice in the few minutes I have left.

Just go with Health Infoway, the federal program. It works already and other provinces have adopted it.

It's another boondoggle. I'm afraid they're going to spend more money on more boondoggles.

But vote for this. It's the right thing. It's about transparency and accountability. It will be the first right thing you've done this session. It's the right thing to do. It isn't as if it's Premier McGuinty versus our leader, Bob Runciman. This is about the people of Ontario needing to have the information. It's their money that you're spending without many rules around it.

I think there's more to be said on this bill, and I'm in hopes that next week when you debate Bill 162, that some of the speech I had prepared I'll actually use next week when I speak on Bill 162. With that, next week—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Not next week, but I'll be preparing the speech next week—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think your time's up. Further debate?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I find this motion to be most curious. We have a lot of profound and very serious debate in this chamber, but when it comes to this motion and others that the party opposite has put forward—the official opposition, the Conservative Party—when it comes to economic and fiscal responsibility, I just have to chuckle. I've been sitting here all afternoon kind of chuckling at their motion. They held a budget at Magna, a parts plant. They went outside of this place to put a budget before the people of Ontario. They report and say that they ruled during times that they themselves claim were good times, excellent times in Ontario, and yet they produced a \$5.6-billion deficit that they hid from the people of Ontario. Also during what they claim were good times, they added \$48 billion to the Ontario debt.

We're on the right course over here on this side of the House. I chuckle and I laugh when I see motions put forward by the party opposite that talk about fiscal responsibility that they have in their history. It is, in fact, mythical. It's a mythical notion that they, that party opposite, the Conservatives, are fiscally responsible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Mississauga—Pickering—Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker. Mississauga's close to my heart but not close to my home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I keep trying to put it in the Scarborough—

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the time we have left this afternoon to speak to—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mississauga-Scarborough?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Yes, that's a stretch. Mississauga-Scarborough would be a bit of a stretch for a riding.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to today's opposition motion. We've heard a number of members of the

Legislature. We've heard, I think, a couple of those sort of barnburner speeches.

I want to thank particularly the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his speech earlier in which he articulated where we will stand in respect to this opposition day motion.

I want to talk a little bit, though, if I could, because this is intended, I guess, to speak to issues of transparency, issues of accountability—not that the members in this House need to be reminded, but I guess we need to do that on occasion—just briefly about at least a few of the processes we currently have in place in this place that provide exactly those levels of accountability that they're asking for, by publishing something as opposed to necessarily debating certain things.

We have the budget itself, we've been through a budget motion debate, and we're in the midst of a budget bill debate, as well as now the second opposition day motion, with more than ample opportunity for every member of this Legislature to have an opportunity to put forward their views on the budget of the government of the day.

We have the question period process on a daily basis in this place, which provides an opportunity for the opposition to hold government to account, the Premier and the cabinet. That's their role, to hold them to account, to keep their feet to the fire as Her Majesty's loyal opposition and the third party. So each and every day, there's an opportunity to seek out and hold government to account for exactly the reasons that the opposition is putting forward.

Partway through the year, once we have finished with the budget process, in the fall we have a fall economic statement. The fall economic statement very formally puts before this Legislature yet again the status of the economic condition of the province at that point in time, as well as any new initiatives that may have come along during the course of the year. Once again, the opposition has every opportunity to hold the government to account around the fall economic statement, which is an update on the status during the course of a fiscal year of the current budget as well as any new initiatives that might occur.

We have standing committees in this place, which takes the debate out of here, with opportunities for opposition to ask exactly these kinds of questions, to put those matters on the record, in Hansard, to have called before them members of cabinet individually and to hold them there for many hours on end in which they can question them on any number of matters in respect to their ministries, not the least of which would include any of the matters that are referenced here, and that process is part of our estimates process on an ongoing basis in this place.

We have public accounts, which also has an obligation to report back to this place on the accounts of the province and the various actions of government.

So we're not without process already—more than readily available to us either in this Legislature or in

standing committees, in which all three parties are engaged, with opportunities that go well beyond what we might be able to achieve here on a given day, in a more direct format, and certainly in more than one standing committee format.

The auditor also plays a very big role in this in providing to this Legislature a report on an annual basis of the actions of government. It's important that we have that information, that we have the opportunity to review what the auditor has to say about the actions that a government takes and, at the same time, for the opposition to be able to use the auditor's report, again, to hold government to account.

Those are only a very few of the types of initiatives that already exist in this place that provide the types of opportunities purported to be asked for in the opposition day motion.

What I find particularly interesting in this motion is that it fails to speak to some of the principal concerns that the people of the province of Ontario have. It fails to speak at all to the vulnerable. They're quick to talk about infrastructure funding, but they're loath to speak to the needs of children. They're quick to speak to new private sector jobs, but they're loath to speak to the disabled within the context of this motion.

If they want to bring forward an opposition day motion to try to hold government further to account, of higher transparency, I would suggest to them that maybe the motion should read along the lines of, "We need a reporting mechanism to ensure five days before the end of each session that you report on the successes you're having in the implementation of the Ontario child benefit; that you report on the implementation of increases to Ontario Works; that you report on the successes you've had in implementing the increases for the Ontario disability support payments," all of which are included in this budget. I would think that they would want to hear in this place from us the impacts of the implementation of increases in the minimum wage from—I think it was—\$6.75 when we took office to \$9.50 now, with one more increase yet to come.

I would think they would be interested in knowing what's happening to those people in our communities who are working at the lower end of the wage scale; would want to know what's happening to them in the context of the work environment and how they're finding themselves in a better position with an increased minimum wage.

They might want to hear about what the impacts are for seniors when we see a doubling in the property tax grant. I think those are the kinds of things the people of Ontario want to know. These budgets aren't always about just me, just you or just you. They really do have to be about us. They have to be about all of us in the province of Ontario, particularly those who are not in the position to speak up for themselves in the same way that we might be; who aren't necessarily in the same position to speak up for themselves through some other organized environment. I would think the opposition would want to ensure

that this government is protecting the interests of those very vulnerable individuals, those children, those with disabilities, those who are finding difficulty getting into the workforce, those seniors. I think they would want to have us account to that matter first.

Very briefly, all I can say is that there are a number of processes in place. Much of what we will do in this budget will be in partnership either with our municipalities, our school boards, our hospitals or the federal government, and any number of measures of accountability are built into all of those structures and all of those agreements.

Speaker, thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Martiniuk, Gerry

Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael

Runciman, Robert W.
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Athurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 48.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House is adjourned until Thursday, April 9, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, France Gélinas
Lisa MacLeod, Gerry Martiniuk
Julia Munro, David Ramsay
Lou Rinaldi, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Markham District Veterans Association

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....5998

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis

Mr. John O'Toole.....5999

Tibetan Canadians

Ms. Laurel C. Broten.....5999

Assistance to the disabled

Mr. Khalil Ramal5999

Rural summer jobs program

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....5999

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Bas Balkissoon6000

Report adopted6000

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Student achievement / Rendement scolaire

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....6000

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....6001

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer.....6002

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones6002

Ontario budget

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti6003

Hospital funding

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk6003

Air quality

Mr. Charles Sousa.....6003

Road safety

Mr. John O'Toole.....6003

Child custody

Mr. Kim Craitor6004

Protection of minors

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....6004

Ontario budget

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....6004

Road safety

Mr. John O'Toole6005

Cemeteries

Mr. Kim Craitor6005

Hospital funding

Mr. Norm Miller.....6005

Lupus

Mr. Kim Craitor6005

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Government accountability

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....6006

Mr. Paul Miller.....6007

Mr. Yasir Naqvi6012

Mr. Toby Barrett6013

Mr. Gilles Bisson6013

Order of business

Hon. John Wilkinson.....6015

Motion agreed to6015

Government accountability (continued)

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde.....6015

Mrs. Julia Munro6017

Mr. Khalil Ramal6018

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....6018

Mr. Jeff Leal.....6019

Mr. John O'Toole.....6020

Mr. Pat Hoy.....6022

Mr. Wayne Arthurs6022

Motion negatived6023

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 8 April 2009 / Mercredi 8 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Road Safety Act, 2009, Bill 126, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2009 sur la sécurité routière, projet de loi 126, M. Bradley

Hon. James J. Bradley	5977
Mrs. Linda Jeffrey	5980
Mr. John O'Toole	5982
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5982
Mr. Jeff Leal	5982
Mrs. Julia Munro	5983
Hon. James J. Bradley	5983
Mr. John O'Toole	5983
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5985
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	5986
Mr. John Yakabuski	5986
Hon. James J. Bradley	5986
Mr. John O'Toole	5987
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	5987

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. George Smitherman	5987
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	5987
Mme France Gélinas	5987

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Senior citizens

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	5987
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5987

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	5988
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5988

Provincial purchasing policy

Mr. Howard Hampton	5989
Hon. James J. Bradley	5989
Hon. George Smitherman	5990

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue	5990
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5990

Taxation

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5991
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5991

Education

Mr. Rosario Marchese	5991
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5991

Environmental protection

Mr. David Oraziotti	5992
Hon. John Gerretsen	5992

Local health integration networks

Mr. Ted Arnott	5992
Hon. David Caplan	5992

Home care

Mme France Gélinas	5993
Hon. David Caplan	5993

Diamond industry

Mr. David Ramsay	5993
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5994

Provincial purchasing policy

Mr. John Yakabuski	5994
Hon. George Smitherman	5994

Attawapiskat First Nation

Mr. Gilles Bisson	5995
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	5995

GO Transit

Mr. Jeff Leal	5995
Hon. James J. Bradley	5996

Government accountability

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	5996
Hon. David Caplan	5996

Assistance to the disabled

Mr. Michael Prue	5997
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5997

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Taxation

Mr. Toby Barrett	5997
------------------------	------

Earthquake in Italy

Mr. Paul Miller	5998
-----------------------	------

Herb Gray

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	5998
-----------------------	------

Green energy legislation

Ms. Sylvia Jones	5998
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
X1
-923



No. 135

N° 135

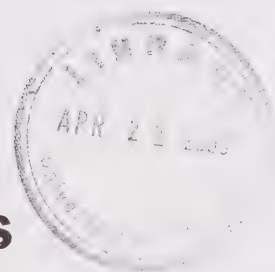
ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature



Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 9 April 2009

Jeudi 9 avril 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Michael Chan: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of this Legislature be permitted to wear pins in remembrance of the brave soldiers who made the greatest sacrifice in the successful battle for Vimy Ridge 92 years ago today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 7, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today on a day when it seems that the contents of this bill are splashed all over the front pages of Canada's national newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*. This is a difficult topic, and perhaps a little arcane to some, but it is a topic that I think is timely, and we need to discuss what is contained within the body of the Budget Measures Act. Just for clarity, for those watching on television, the Budget Measures Act is a companion piece to the budget; every year we are asked to comment on a number of measures, usually following the budget, and occasionally in the fall as well, when additional or companion documents are forthcoming.

In this budget there are really two key elements that I want to address in the time allotted to me. The first one I want to talk about is the pension benefits guarantee fund and the second one is the extraordinary measures that have been given to the Ontario Securities Commission and the ministry to deal with market volatility.

As I started out, I think what was said on the front page of today's *Globe and Mail* is instrumental to all of us to understand the magnitude of what is being suggested in this Budget Measures Act, and for people to understand the extraordinary powers that the government is

trying to give itself for whatever rationale the Minister of Finance thinks important.

I'll just quote a few of the lines from today's *Globe and Mail* about what is happening. I think the very first line ought to cause some problems to members of government; it's under the byline of Karen Howlett and Greg Keenan, and the very first line says it all: "The Ontario government is moving to cut the support net for pensioners just as General Motors Corp. GM-N and Chrysler LLC teeter on the edge."

So what this government is attempting to do, by way of this act, is to secure itself and secure its own finances, possibly to the detriment of those pensioners who work for two of the largest corporations in this country: General Motors and Chrysler. That's what is contained within the body of this bill, and I'm sure that there are many people out there watching who are nervous, upset and unsure about what is going to happen to their pensions, their pension funds—whether or not they're ever going to realize them—who are watching very carefully what this government is attempting to do by reason of Bill 162.

The article goes on in the next sentence to state: "Amid fears of a bankruptcy protection filing by one of the major auto makers, the province is moving to limit the amount of money it would have to pay in a pension bailout."

I think any cursory reading of this bill will show that the government is giving itself the authority to pay, but also the authority not to pay, and also the authority to limit the amount of pay, leaving the whole field wide open. It is going to be completely within the purview of the Minister of Finance. It's even being taken out of the authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Not even the cabinet is going to have a say, should this bill pass. It's being left up to the Minister of Finance to make whatever decision he may choose to make in these times of economic turmoil, and that's what's in the body of the bill.

I think if I were a pensioner out there, I would be wondering whether or not my pension was safe, and I would be wondering a lot whether the bill is right in limiting the authority to simply one member of this Legislature. It's an extraordinary bill, as I said.

It goes on in the body of the *Globe and Mail* today. Skip down a couple of lines, and it quotes the Premier:

"Premier Dalton McGuinty yesterday described the money available as 'very, very modest.'"

"That comes nowhere near meeting any liabilities—for example, for the auto sector alone, to say nothing of all the other sectors," Mr. McGuinty said."

So the government, in setting out its budget and in setting out Bill 162, has not put sufficient monies, but is asking this Legislature to put all the safeguards to save, blame harmless, the government of Ontario.

I go on to what else was said in the *Globe and Mail*:

"But the pension benefits guarantee fund is now in deficit, leaving it ill-equipped to address any pension shortfall in the province.

"We would never have all the money that would be needed to top it up to meet all the demands for all Ontarians who are experiencing troubles with their pension plans," Mr. McGuinty said."

I think the government is trying, in effect, to state that, in these extraordinary circumstances, the government of Ontario is not the group that is going to assist those whose pension benefits are at risk. I think that is very—I don't know. If I were a pensioner, if I was relying on my pension, if I was relying on the government of Ontario to ensure that my pension would continue to be paid after I had worked so hard for 20 or 30 or 40 years, I'd think that there is cold comfort here, contained within the body of this bill that the government is asking members of the Legislature to pass.

0910

The *Globe and Mail* article goes on to state, "The omnibus ... bill contains a provision to amend existing legislation, giving the finance minister new powers to deal unilaterally with such a crisis. Under existing legislation, the minister needs authorization from the Lieutenant Governor to make loans to the fund. But under the proposed changes, the minister could make grants to the fund on his own."

Now, I really don't understand why the minister requires this additional authority. Surely, the Lieutenant Governor in Council—that is, the cabinet—who has had the authority to make loans to the funds for the last 20 or 30 or 40 years, seems to be unilaterally giving up that right in favour of one member, and one member alone, of the cabinet. I would have some considerable difficulty with this. I do know that the finance minister is a man who has considerable political acumen, and I do understand that he would understand, on the advice of his officials, what might need to be done, but it would seem to me that the cabinet has a responsibility—not just one individual, but the entire cabinet—to do what is necessary in order to make sure that these funds remain solvent, that the monies are forthcoming, that they're done in an appropriate way and that the cabinet is answerable to this Legislature, that all of the members of the Lieutenant Governor in Council are answerable to the members of this Legislature on their actions. Instead, it seems that the cabinet is absolving itself of the responsibility and leaving it in the hands of simply the finance minister. I find this rather strange. I don't know—perhaps one of the members opposite can explain when they stand up to speak—why this action is being taken and why the cabinet, in particular, wants to change the duties incumbent upon it at this point and give it up, alone, to the finance minister.

The *Globe and Mail* article, skipping down a little bit, quotes Mr. Mitch Frazer, a pension lawyer at Torys: "I really think it's the GM issue," said Mitch Frazer, a pension lawyer at Torys LLP. "This is the last remaining too-big-to-fail plan." Later in the article, "The government is basically saying 'If we have a whole series of bankruptcies, we're not going to be there to backstop the fund, let's make that very clear,'" Mr. Frazer said. "All you need is one large bankruptcy and you wipe out all of the money in the fund."

So it appears that the government is attempting, through this omnibus bill that's got very little play so far, to go out there and make the changes so that it can protect itself, can protect the cabinet, can protect the Legislature and perhaps the government of Ontario. But at what cost to the people who have paid into, their entire lives, the pensions; at what cost to the pension guarantee funds and everything else upon which ordinary Ontarians rely?

Currently, if a loan guarantee is made to one of the pension funds—and we have seen some of those pension funds debated here during my time in office over the last seven years. I remember in particular one co-op that was having difficulty matching its pension funds and the debate that took place in this Legislature. The government was able, if it saw fit, to float a loan, to give money to the pension fund to allow it to continue to operate, to make it possible to restructure, to make it possible to make new investments that might prove more lucrative. That's what has been done in the past, but the money needed to be repaid. Under the provisions of this particular act, the new law will not require that it be repaid. So on the one hand you have the government trying to protect itself, and on the other hand you have the government saying that not necessarily will the monies have to be paid back. This is all over the map and it's all being left to one individual, the Minister of Finance.

There is a new section as well, talking about the new maximum liability as limited to the assets in the fund. Heretofore, someone who lost their pension would have been able to, I suppose, go out and attempt court action, would have been able to go to the courts and sue the pension fund for not properly managing the monies, and could have attempted, I guess, to obtain monies over and beyond what was in the pension fund. What this is going to do is limit the liability of any of the funds to the assets that are in the fund. That is going to severely limit the legal rights of pensioners, of people who have paid into the fund over the long term, to protect their assets. There is a provision as well that allows the government to step in and then a provision that allows the government not to step in—again, leaving it all in the hands of one member of this Legislature.

There is one shining hope, though. I don't want to be always negative, because when you are a critic you have to look at all aspects of the bill. When you sit on this side of the House, you have to look at both the good and the bad. I have suggested some of the problems I find with this bill, but there is one shining, good thing—because I

always try to find something good in everything. I am pleased to see that there is an ongoing actuarial analysis to increase the \$1,000 maximum payment that has been in effect literally now for more than 20 years. In that period of time, inflation has eaten the money. That \$1,000 monthly, which may have been enough upon which to retire 20 years ago, certainly won't cut it today. I know there have been reports and commissions that are suggesting that \$2,500 a month is more in keeping with today's costs of living. There is a provision within the bill and there is some allowability for an actuarial analysis to be taken to see whether or not the fund can be increased and the payments can be increased from the current maximum of \$1,000 a month to \$2,500. That is a good thing, and I commend whoever put this into the bill for looking ahead long-term, at least in this aspect.

Again, to go back, I do find it troubling, and I think today's *Globe and Mail* found it troubling as well, that at a time of economic downturn, at a time when General Motors, Chrysler, the parts manufacturers and many industries across this province are having problems paying into and supporting the funds necessary for pensions, the government is taking upon itself extraordinary authority both to do good and not do good, to allow ministers to intervene and give them the authority to choose not to intervene. It's all contained here within the body of what one can only describe as a very amorphous bill, an ether-eal bill, one that really would shift with the winds and could produce good results and, again, could produce very bad results for the pensioners of Ontario.

On this particular aspect—and I'll get into some of the others in the bill—I believe that we need to have very strong public hearings. I believe that the people from the pension funds and the pensioners who may be affected should have an opportunity to come before a committee of this Legislature, likely the finance committee, upon which I sit, and talk about the merits or non-merits of what is being contained here. When people pay into a pension their entire lives, when they rely upon that pension at the time they are 65, they want to know that it's there. Anyone and any action that will take it away or reduce it in any way would have deleterious consequences to the pensions and people who rely on them. So I'm hoping that the government is going to allow for some considerable discussion in committee and would be open to changes that may be suggested by pension fund managers and ordinary pension recipients to make sure that what has been paid in and what is being relied upon remains secure.

The second aspect of the bill that I want to talk about is the Commodity Futures Act and the Securities Act. This is a part of the bill which I suppose we could expect, given the turmoil that is happening in the stock markets not only in Ontario, but elsewhere in Canada and around the world. What is being proposed here within the body of this bill is that very substantial amendments will be made to the Commodity Futures Act and the Securities Act, giving the province and the Ontario Securities Commission the powers to take immediate action in extra-

ordinary circumstances—essentially extreme market volatility—to protect the public interest.

0920

Ordinarily, I would say this is a pretty good thing, because the market has been fluctuating almost daily, going up and down 200 and 300 points on an almost daily basis. The volatility out there is enormous. People who have invested their life's savings in the market, people who play the commodities or the futures markets and people who have ordinary investments in blue-chip stocks have been taken on a roller-coaster ride over the last year or two. It's trite—one need not belabour the point too much—to say that the Toronto Stock Exchange has gone from a high well over 14,000 points to where it is today, which is slightly below 9,000 points, in the last year, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average has fared even worse. People's entire life savings have been all but wiped out.

I think we need to give some kind of support to the Ontario Securities Commission and the government in order to make sure this volatility can be tamed somewhat. I take some comfort in the fact that this has happened in the United States. The SEC has been given this authority and seems to be acting in a similar way in the United States. We seem to follow, not lead, on this issue. But all the same, it is perhaps an idea whose time has come.

The criteria are set out for determining whether extraordinary circumstances exist, and the commission is authorized to make specific orders that expire in 10 days or less. Here we have an authority granted, but not really granted. It's granted for a limited period of time, and then that authority will expire. I'm not sure what kind of comfort that is going to give to those who have invested large sums of money in the stock exchange. But all the same, it is there. I'm not sure why the government, if they believe this is a good measure, has chosen such a limited time frame. Perhaps one of the members opposite can stand up and explain why, if you think it's such a good idea, you are limiting that authority for a 10-day period only.

I know the members opposite, most of whom believe in the system and what happens down at the stock exchange, would be supportive of a very open and free market. But at the same time, they are taking actions here that would close it off in the short term for up to 10 days. I need to understand from the members opposite why, at this juncture, they believe the market cannot be trusted. Because over the years that I've been sitting in here and over the years I have been watching the Legislature, I have heard most often, save and except perhaps during the years 1990 to 1995, that we ought to put our faith and trust in the market and the conditions. It seems to me that that faith is somewhat waning, and the authority granted to the Ontario Securities Commission to make extraordinary specific orders for 10 days is testament to that.

It goes on: "With the approval of the Minister of Finance, the commission is authorized to make regulations that are revoked in 30 days or less, but that can be extended." Again, here is a bill that is not really doing what it's supposed to do. If the government honestly believes you're supposed to rein in the market and give the On-

tario Securities Commission or the ministry the authority to do so, it is only allowing it for very short periods of time but, on the other hand, saying it's okay if they make extensions. I'm not really sure where the government is coming from on the bill. I know they want to grant these extraordinary powers to the Minister of Finance, and again, I'm not necessarily convinced that leaving it in the hands of one person is ideal.

As I said, what has been lifted here is from the securities commission in the United States. And although we follow them in many aspects, their market seems to be in even worse turmoil than our own. We, in general, would support broadening the powers of the OSC, and I should state that for the record. However, we continue to focus on the key conflicts of interest in the Ontario Securities Commission and the self-regulating parts of the securities industry.

I was in committee the other day—it was not the finance committee; I believe it was the government agencies committee—where the Ontario Securities Commission was called, I think, for the second or third or fourth time in as many months, to come and explain what is happening within that body and the efforts they are making.

Quite frankly, I am not satisfied that those efforts are taking place quickly enough. I do acknowledge and state for the record that after years of inaction on the part of the Ontario Securities Commission, there seems to be some movement to change their mandate and their body and their appointment process. But in many of the key aspects, including the adjudicative function, there has been no movement at all.

In terms of their constantly stating that they are waiting for the day that we can have one securities regulator in Canada, the question was put to them, “What about Quebec?” and there is no contingency plan if we never get down that road.

I would suggest that there are a lot of things that are still required of that commission. But what is contained in the body of this bill, at least in terms of regulating and smoothing out the huge fluctuations that are taking place, is supportable.

We also strongly believe that shareholders should have more say over executive compensation. I did, in the last Parliament, introduce a private member's bill, which of course didn't go anywhere. It was euphemistically called the Conrad Black bill. At that point, Mr. Black was still before the courts. That case has now been dealt with. But what we were seeking to do was to look at compensation that is paid to executives. I remember some of the hoots and hollers that took place in this very chamber when the suggestion was made that maybe executive compensation was a little bit high and that maybe we should have some kind of a bill or a law in Ontario that looked at the compensation to determine whether or not it was excessive.

I know that many of the private enterprise and private marketers thought that whatever was paid was okay. But I have to say that I think that bill would have gone a long

way in Ontario, and if it was a template for anywhere else in the world, to change some of the excesses that we have seen in the market: in seeing General Motors and Chrysler and Ford hopping into their private jets and leaving Detroit and going to Washington; in seeing the compensation packages that have been paid out to AIG executives after the government bailed out that company in the United States, and then to see them walk away with millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds that were supposed to be used for restructuring the company and instead went into the pockets of executives because they had signed such lucrative deals.

It seems to me that this government should be looking at that, should be looking and including—perhaps, if not in this bill, then in the ones we can expect in the fall—whether there should be something akin to the Conrad Black bill to address and to look at how much executive compensation can take place.

We also believe that it is time for those parts of the capital market that are currently unregulated or insufficiently regulated, such as hedge funds, private equity, to come under appropriate regulation as discussed in the recent G20 meetings. This bill, unfortunately, is silent on all of these matters. We are in a time of economic turmoil. We know what other countries are doing, we know what other regulators are doing, and we need to be a part of that. This government has chosen, through this bill, not to be part of it yet. But it is ongoing, and I would hope that the government, when it comes back in the fall or later on, before the end—not likely before the summer recess, but in the fall when it comes back with additional omnibus bills—tries to mirror what is happening around the world and particularly in the G20.

Canada, of course, is unique. We are the only country of the G20, the only country in the industrialized world that has separate markets in each one of the provinces. We're the only ones who don't have a national regulator. Until we get that, Ontario is, in my view, going to have to play the role of a national regulator. We are the largest stock exchange in Canada. We are the one in Toronto, through which most of the money flows. The others are very much smaller: Montreal, Vancouver—they are all very much smaller. We are going to have to play the role here in Ontario until such time as there is a national regulator. We are therefore, in order to protect not only Ontario but the investors of Canada, most of whom invest through the Toronto Stock Exchange, going to have to do the same things that the G20 is currently looking at—that is, hedge funds, private equity and others—in order to do what is right. I ask the government, if not in this bill then in the next one, please start looking at that. In the absence of a national regulator, the onus falls upon us.

0930

There are several other small items contained within the body of this bill, as there always are in omnibus bills, that are worthy of a couple of minutes' comment. The first is the Government Advertising Act, which will “extend the application of the act to advertisements screened

at a cinema and to public transit advertisements" in addition to the present print and electronic media outlets. I found it a little strange that the government wants to seek to extend its authority on what can be advertised and screened at a cinema. The trailers of films? Somebody's advertising for candy or to go down to get popcorn? That will now fall under the authority of the government of Ontario.

Public transit advertisements: I do see them, particularly here in the city of Toronto, although I have seen them in other jurisdictions, most notably in Ottawa and Hamilton; the advertisements in bus shelters, in subways, at places where people await transportation. I'm wondering why the government needs that kind of authority. Quite simply, there was a question asked only a couple of weeks ago by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo—it was Ms. Witmer; I hope I have the right riding—about the advertisements in the bus shelters in the riding of Toronto Centre which featured, quite prominently, the Deputy Premier talking about an act which had not yet been proclaimed. I don't know whether the government has taken this action in view of the question that was asked, because the bill came after that, or what the government intends to do to regulate what can be put in a bus shelter, the property of the TTC. I take it the authority was always vested in the city of Toronto, at least here, and in the authorities in other municipalities. It seems to me—and I have said for a long time now, and I think it bears repeating, that we need to give more authority to the municipalities in order to do what is right, not take that authority away. I don't know why this government wants to get into the censorship angle of what can be displayed or how it is displayed, when that responsibility should rest with the municipalities. I think, certainly in the cases of the larger ones, Toronto and Mississauga and Hamilton and Ottawa, that they have done so admirably.

The other thing the Government Advertising Act does: "Section 6 of the act sets out the standards that reviewable advertisements, reviewable printed matter and reviewable messages are required to meet." Again, I don't know the reason for that. Perhaps there is a good one, but it's just something I want to flag for the public's attention, for anyone who might be watching this speech.

There are a couple of other smaller, related items: the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act and the Police Services Act. It's strange the way it's written. Again, I ask the government members to explain, or perhaps one of them can stand up and explain later in the debate what is intended here, because it says, "Changes to this act integrate islands"—and that's the word that is used, islands—"of non-OPP union employees into the main OPP union." I don't know whether this is consolidation that's been asked for by the Ontario Provincial Police union, by the Ontario Provincial Police, by Mr. Fantino. I don't know why this is necessary, and I'm even not sure who's involved, but I think that those islands, those people, those unionized or non-unionized employees, need to have an opportunity to come forward. So I'm asking again, just so that we can better understand

it in the absence of anything that has been said in this Legislature to date, that hearings ought to be held to allow this issue to be canvassed, to make sure that we are doing right by the employees and those who belong to islands.

The last is the teachers' pension fund. This "permits the Minister of Education and the executive of the Ontario Teachers' Federation to enter into an agreement granting the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan board the power to incorporate one or more corporations and invest assets of the pension fund in such a corporation." I don't know that they've asked for it. If they've asked for it and the government is in agreement, I certainly wouldn't have any difficulty with it, but I think we need to find out, and again, that is why I'm asking that this matter go to committee.

I will close in a minute or two, Mr. Speaker; I don't require the entire hour on this bill. But this is a bill with some contention. This is a bill that grants extraordinary powers to one member of the executive council; namely, the finance minister. It is a bill that may or may not assist those people who are losing their pensions and their life's pension plans. It may or may not assist the pension boards in properly meeting their obligations. It may or may not hold blameless or harmless the government of Ontario, depending on which provisions are being used. At the same time, there are the provisions set out on the Ontario Securities Commission that allow for greater authority but not necessarily greater authority: a 10-day window or not necessarily a 10-day window; a 30-day window that may be extended or not necessarily that window.

Again, we need to hear exactly what the government intends and we need to hear from the experts who will be affected about how this is going to work to the health and the benefit of the Ontario Securities Commission and to the largest regulator in Canada. I haven't heard that, and I'm hoping that in public hearings people will come forward to talk about the benefits or non-benefits of what is being put forward so that the people of Ontario can understand.

In terms of the other bills, they're relatively minor. The Government Advertising Act: I don't understand why the government feels it needs this authority or wants to take it away, in particular, from the municipalities, or why they feel they have to go in to look at movie trailers or what is being advertised in the cinema.

I'm not sure how the changes to the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act and the Police Services Act are going to play out. I don't understand the use of the word "islands," and I think that needs to be clarified. I also want to make sure that what is being proposed for the teachers' pension fund, the largest pension fund in the province, is in fact what the teachers' pension fund wants to do, and how that will affect the people of Ontario. After all, this bill, as its main thrust, is looking at pension plans, and I want to make sure we are doing what is right by those plans.

In the end, what I'm asking for is an opportunity for all of this to come before the appropriate committee—I

would assume the finance committee—and that there be some considerable dialogue between the people of Ontario, who will be most affected, and the members of this Legislature to make sure that what we are doing is correct. I know that in times of crisis, governments often-times react, and react badly. They react too strongly. I remember the War Measures Act—not to equate this with the War Measures Act—and how strongly the government acted to take away civil liberties. I remember that the same thing happened with the Securities Act in Canada after 9/11, and how strongly government acted against the rights of the people of this country.

I am mindful that in these economic terms, and in terms of what is happening here in the Legislature, we may be reaching too far or not far enough. But I want a full and open debate; I want an opportunity for all those affected to come forward to make sure that what we are doing is correct, is best and in the best economic interests of the people of this province.

I'm suggesting that the government ought to set aside three, four or five days of hearings in Ontario, and that perhaps we should take this outside of Toronto, at least to places like Ottawa or out to Windsor and Oshawa to have a discussion on the pension plans, particularly as they are going to affect the Detroit Three, because it is a matter of some considerable importance. We are looking at \$6 billion or more in bailouts, in terms of pension funds, and how this act is going to impact upon that. I think it behooves us as legislators to listen to what is going to be said, to listen to the experts in the pension plans and how they're going to be affected, and how we are going to, ourselves, end up possibly being responsible for payment of billions of dollars to companies that may go into bankruptcy.

Those would be my comments, and I thank the members for their patience in listening.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand today in support of Bill 162. This budget reflects our government's fiscally responsible, prudent and balanced approach. Our government's highest priority is to help families and businesses that are caught up in the global recession and financial storm so that when prosperity comes back and the economy rebounds, we can have a more competitive and sustainable economy in the long run.

On the day when budget details were announced, I happened to meet with a small business owner, a photographer. Do you know what his first words to me were? "I like the budget, especially the single sales tax, which will save me time and money, all of which I can reinvest in my business in various ways, including hiring more people."

Our government has been building on the progress we have made. We have the best health care system in the world. I would like to share a story with you from a lady who suffered from breast cancer. Meera says, "Many in-

dividuals criticize our health system due to its long waits. Let me tell you that after all necessary lab tests, when doctors confirmed I had cancer, I got operated on within two weeks—just two weeks.... Is that a long wait? No way. This is the best system in the world, and where patients don't need to pay a single penny."

This budget will, I'm sure, provide a true stimulus in the creation of wealth now and in the future, and it will provide job creation. I'm very happy to support this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talked eloquently about the budget and the direction it goes in. I believe this budget is totally wrong-headed and wrong-directed, as I think the member may agree with me, at least in part. To raise taxes at this point in time when we're entering a world global recession is putting the economy of Canada, as strong as the Canadian economy is—mainly because of the western provinces—in severe jeopardy.

There are so many things at play in the world economy. We saw some of them this week at the G20 meetings in Europe and some of the things that are coming out of that, with the US begging the rest of the world to spend at unprecedented rates, when the US has a budget that they have brought in that is based on a 50% deficit—50% of the expenditures of the United States will be on borrowed money. How sustainable is that, and what effect will that have on the world economy over the next couple of years? And Ontario is placing itself as a high-tax jurisdiction, which in that world that we might enter is totally unsustainable.

This budget should have focused itself on sustainable services, on a sustainable tax flow, on something that we could afford. This budget does not do that, and the future will show that this government has placed Ontario in an untenable position, and we will all be poorer for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to comment on the comments made by my colleague from Beaches–East York. I thank him for his thoughtful comments.

I want to focus very briefly on the green economy aspect of this budget. As you know, the government has put forward Bill 150, the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, to revolutionize the future in this province vis-à-vis green energy and creating and harnessing job opportunities in terms of the development of Ontario. This budget of course puts further teeth into that intention which is behind Bill 150 by putting a substantive amount of investment that is necessary to enhance green energy and the green economy in Ontario. For example: \$250 million over five years for a new emerging technologies fund that will include investments in green technology companies; approximately \$390 million to match Ontario's share of the federal green infrastructure fund; \$50 million over five years to enable the research capital and demonstration projects necessary for the development of

a smart grid in Ontario—and there are many more initiatives along those lines.

One aspect I do want to cover, which I think is also important, is changes to the Assessment Act so that in the future, if the budget is passed, if people make their homes more energy-efficient, those enhancements to their home will not count towards an increase in their assessed value. I think that is a good step in the right direction by making that change, because we are aligning, essentially, our public policy in terms of encouraging people to make their homes more energy-efficient, but then on the other hand not penalizing them by increasing their assessed value. This change through this amendment ensures that those two features are totally aligned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for giving me a chance to stand up, speak and comment on the speech from the member for Beaches–East York. I know he's passionate about many different subjects, especially about social issues in our society, but I want to assure the member—I know when he spoke about many different things he outlined his positions, and I understand that he outlined the position of the NDP, which is fair. Many times, the opposition stand up in their places and speak about whatever the government does, and they take a certain position. In this regard, I know he doesn't support the budget, he doesn't support many elements of the budget, and supported part of it.

But this budget, I would assure him, came as a result of the circumstances we face in Ontario—the economy collapsing around the globe. I think that's why we took a lot of measurements, in order to support our pillars in our society, from job creation, innovation and research, social issues and infrastructure. In our belief, in our understanding, this element which we introduced in the budget, if this budget passes, would strengthen our economy and give us the way to go to the next phase of our lives, with the strength and ability to maintain our existence in this world.

I know it doesn't matter what you do these days—you cannot cover all the things; you cannot be perfect. But I think this budget brought a lot of good elements, and it speaks to the reality which we are facing in the province of Ontario. I'm very confident in our Premier and our finance minister. When this budget passes, they're going to create some kind of stimulus to our economy, create jobs and maintain our advantage in North America and also in the global market.

I'm looking forward to getting more chances to speak on this budget, hopefully, in the future. I will be able to outline my positions and explain to the people of Ontario where we stand in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York now has two minutes to reply to those questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Mississauga–Brampton South, Halton, Ottawa Centre and London–Fanshawe for their comments, but I have to ask

myself—I spoke for almost 40 minutes. I talked particularly about the pension benefits plan and how this particular bill is going to operate, and the extraordinary powers given to the minister. I talked about the Ontario Securities Commission and the extraordinary powers that were going to be given there under this particular bill. And then the responses from my colleagues—I'm not sure whether I perhaps was not the most eloquent speaker today, but the comments from my colleagues were nothing about those at all. They were about their particular views on the budget. I never once mentioned the budget. I never once talked about the budget or whether I was opposed or for the new HST. I never once talked about all the contentious or non-contentious things contained within the body of the budget, because that was a different act. The members here seem to want to talk about that and not about the bill before them.

0950

I am asking for some legitimate debate about what is contained within the bill, and I did not hear any back, with all respect to my colleagues. I heard about the budget, I heard about the green economy, I heard about health care, I heard about all kinds of things that were not even said once. I would ask them to pay attention to the debate. The people of Ontario have a right to know what is going to happen to the Pension Benefits Act; they have a right to know, if they are investors, what is going to happen at the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Ontario Securities Commission and through the ministry. That is what is contained within Bill 162 and that's what should have been responded to.

I take no umbrage because I know that oftentimes members, particularly backbenchers, only get a two-minute hit and that's the only opportunity they get to actually talk about something that they may want to talk about, but it's supposed to be a response to what I had to say, and I'm disappointed it was not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I call for further debate, the member for Beaches–East York is quite right, and I'm glad he raised that point. As a former assistant Speaker, he is quite right that questions and comments are supposed to relate back to the original speech that the member makes. I know that during budget debates and budget bill debates there's greater latitude allowed in terms of what is debated, but the member is quite correct and I would encourage all members to keep that in mind when they are making their questions and comments.

Further debate?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'm more than pleased to join the debate this morning, but I will take advantage of my opportunity to comment on the highlights of the budget. I rarely receive that opportunity; I'm delighted to have it this morning.

In reference to a comment made earlier by the honourable member of the opposition that this budget fails to address the need to make our economy more competitive, I would say "au contraire." I think that what this budget does is recognize exactly the position that we are in in

very turbulent times. Indeed, I would go so far—and I don't think that I in any way am getting into hyperbole when I say that when historians look back at the turbulence of this time and the fact that we had a Liberal government led by the Premier we have, they will note that we had the courage, the wisdom and the wherewithal to look at and address the situation we are in and not resort to old policies and old ways of doing business that simply will no longer work. As the Premier has said, we can't do business as usual because it isn't business as usual. We have to indeed embark on restructuring the economy of Ontario, and that's exactly what this budget has set out to do. I believe, as I've commented, we will be noted for that, that in turbulent times we had the wisdom and the wherewithal to address the economy and not to nibble around the edges.

The reason I'm very proud of this economy is two-fold, if I can just speak on two streams. That is to say that I think we are looking at the need to enhance a private sector, enable them to become more competitive, to continue to compete globally, by taking initiatives in tax reductions, by adding the tax relief that they need, by creating a situation where they are less encumbered by regulations, freer to compete, freer to show the world the kind of talent and resources that exist here in Ontario. While we are busy doing just that within the ambit of this budget, we are likewise remembering always that this is a Liberal budget. And because it is a Liberal budget, our obligation is to those who perhaps are frequently marginalized; our obligation is to make sure that they have the safety net in social programming such as the Ontario child benefit, which is a hugely important tool within the social network. We have combined our obligations, first and foremost, to behave as a Liberal government, to be there and reinforce all of the public policies of the past, and at the same time to enable a private sector to act and grow and be innovative at a time when it is extremely difficult in the current recession.

So I am disappointed when I hear the comments, particularly from the Conservatives, whom I've always understood to be the great champion of the private sector, when they fail to see just exactly what we've done and fail to recognize those initiatives and to put them into perspective, which certainly the economists, the media and generally the citizens and voters in my riding have done.

There is a great acknowledgment that this government has moved in all of the right directions—in our fiscal stimulus, in our initiatives in infrastructure and, if I can just move into my portfolio, in the enhancing of the tax support for Ontario's interactive digital media products. I will kind of wax a bit on that sector.

If we look at the new economy and if we look at where Ontario has to go and to be competitive, it is indeed in exactly that kind of an area—interactive digital. We are, with no problems at all, I think I can say, competing globally in that regard. We have the talent here at home. We have the businesses ready to continue to compete. This government recognizes that. This government

moves forward to do exactly what that industry needs very much, and that is for the creation of, earlier, the tax, for making taxes in the creative sector permanent, for decreasing the ability of other jurisdictions to compete with us. We have, in the creative industry in Ontario, the talent, the wherewithal, the companies and the knowledge to compete with New York, to compete with Los Angeles and to compete with anywhere else in the world where a company might be considering locating.

What are we doing? Through the initiatives in this budget, we are enabling our sector here in Ontario to compete globally, to compete all over North America, but we're also sending a message to businesses around the world: "Do your business here in Ontario." We're creating a tax structure with this budget like no other. There is no other jurisdiction you can consider that can in any way compete with this one as a place of doing business, whether it's in the cultural sector, where I have the privilege to work, or whether it is in a variety of other sectors where you see Ontario moving forward like no other jurisdiction. I think that it's disappointing not to see any approbation from the opposition for the government's initiatives in that regard.

At the same time that we are doing all of what we're doing to compete in that regard, I think it's important to note, as I said earlier, what we're doing for that part of our society where help is most required from a government—by accelerating the Ontario child benefit, bringing it up two years ahead of schedule. The day after the budget I was home in Barrie, and I think that we received more kudos for that than for almost any other initiative. I was joined by members from the business community but also from many of the social agencies. I'll tell you quite honestly that when the media chose not to ask me my views, thinking maybe I'm not as objective as I might be, but instead spoke to members from the social agencies there at city hall that morning after the budget, the comments from the social agencies were hugely positive and supportive of what the government's budget had recognized—

1000

Mr. Jeff Leal: Wise people in Barrie; very wise people in Barrie.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Very wise people in Barrie.

If I can move from my particular responsibilities and interests in the cultural industries to the fact that I am also the minister responsible for the Seniors' Secretariat, I think much of what the budget contains there is very important. Our strategy to combat elder abuse is vital, and \$1.65 million is being invested to help protect seniors by extending our strategy to combat elder abuse.

We make difficult decisions; we have tough days. We need to sometimes explain a particular piece of the budget, such as the single sales tax, a very important part of our strategy, an initiative we very much needed to undertake and had the courage to undertake. It's not an easy change, it's one that many people will need to shift to accept, but in doing that, we've joined other jurisdictions. Almost every member of the OECD—the Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development, which is an organization of 130 countries—has a consolidated or single tax. And when the Maritime provinces went forward with that in the late 1990s—well in advance of us, which is a little bit disconcerting, that at the time Ontario wasn't out ahead there, but we are out ahead in every other way now—there was a 12% increase in their GDP. So this works.

It's not easy, but Ontarians join this government in our courage, and Ontarians understand that these are not normal times, this situation we're in, where our media is churning out daily what's happening in our auto sector, where Washington is moving, where Ottawa is going. Ontarians understand that this government had to respond with courage as well. They know, just like they knew during the time of the Depression, that we need to do things in a different manner; we need to pull in within ourselves and have the self-discipline and courage to face the adversity and come out on the other side, and we will come out on the other side, not only because of this government, but partly, very much, because this government has joined with the citizens in Ontario in rolling up our sleeves and doing everything we can to help us get through this together.

But if I just might come, then, to the fact that within the budget is a recognition of the role and pressures that are on seniors. The demographics show that seniors in Ontario is a sector that's increasing rapidly and disproportionately to other age groups. As such, there are pressures there. We have responded, for instance, on the property tax front. We had, prior to this budget, given relief of \$250 to seniors who required it. When I go door to door in Barrie during an election or I'm out in the grocery store or other places and I meet seniors, they say: "It's not too bad. I'm able to stay in my home. That's where I want to be, but I'm on a fixed income, and the property tax is a real issue." So prior to the budget, Mr. Speaker and colleagues, we responded to that, but in this budget, we doubled that tax relief for seniors from \$250 to \$500.

Further, coming back to elder abuse, this is an increasing phenomena, and one that gives me great pause, and my colleagues here with me. As I was saying, these are the difficult issues that we need to explain well to our constituents at home, to family, to friends, that this is why we did this, this is where we're going, and this is why we're convinced it's right.

At the same time, we have the opportunity to call people, as I did in ONPEA and other wonderful seniors' organizations, to tell them that the government has responded, as we did on the elder abuse. I can tell you that, without naming the person—she said to me, "I can't even talk—what this money enables us to do in our organization, which we didn't think there was any chance of being able to do—I'm breathless." So there are those very wonderful parts of the post-budget period.

Speaking about particular protection for seniors, we've introduced tough consumer protection legislation that helps seniors and other groups who are often the tar-

get of fraud. We've included increasing fines for real estate fraud, to \$50,000 from \$1,000.

There are many, many particular pieces that impact on seniors, whether it's the property tax, whether it's elder abuse, whether it's assisting seniors who receive phone calls that are very clever, very confusing, and assisting them in that regard on the fraud response.

I realize that building a budget is a very complex process. There are many competing interests. I think we've done as good a job as any government could have done to take all of those interests into account, recognize we are on the threshold of having to reconfigure and restructure an economy, and having the courage to go there.

If I can, I'll speak just a little bit more about the creative and entertainment cluster and how we contribute. With the word "culture," people think of lovely things. They think of the way we as a diverse society express ourselves, whether it's how we dance or what we paint in a picture. It's the song that we sing; it's all of what we see our museums and galleries promoting; it's the national ballet, the film festival in Sudbury, what we're doing in all of that regard. Indeed, culture is exactly that: the composite of our creative energies.

But what people don't always realize is that the cultural sector is a cultural industry. We are the fourth-largest contributor to the GDP in Ontario. We contribute in excess of \$20 billion a year to our economy. The numbers of employed in the cultural sector grow at a rate far in excess of the average growth rate in any other sector.

This government recognizes, in the announcement that I had the privilege of making yesterday, just how important the infusion of monies into that sector is, and the impact and multiplier effect that result. In that regard, too, it's a global competition. You can see what they are doing in New York, London and Los Angeles to draw creative people. As Dr. Richard Florida says, where the creative people go, the economy flourishes. We know that, we get that and that's why we do considerable investing in that cultural sector here in Ontario.

A big piece of the cultural sector is film and TV production. The tax credits our finance minister has assigned to that sector—increased and enhanced considerably in the budget—allow us to out-compete other jurisdictions. The response you've had from the film and TV sector indicates their tremendous gratitude to the government for having the wisdom, foresight and the understanding of their competitive edge to go there and reinforce that sector by our response in the budget.

I think that it's important to understand, perhaps, the philosophy of a Liberal government. We are addressing—

Mr. Michael Prue: If you can explain it.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: My pleasure to do so.

Mr. Michael Prue: We'd all like to know.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: The philosophy of a Liberal budget, if I may enlighten the member from the third party, is to have the courage to reinforce the competitive edge that this province has, to enable business—as I said earlier, and I don't want to be redundant—to out-com-

pete, produce jobs, become the best place in which any company would want to do business; to encourage the people who will come to a place—the knowledge-trained people who accompany that kind of growth, who want to work in those businesses to do all of that. And we're doing that. We're doing that with an understanding that it has to be done differently than ever before. We're understanding as well that the people of Ontario join us in their knowledge that this is not business as usual. But it's important to know that maybe we differ somewhat from former Conservative governments here in this hallowed place; that we do that so that we can produce the resources to reinforce the social safety net I talked about earlier, so that we create and maintain a balance.

1010

When this government took over in 2003—and I was not a member at that time but I certainly have great pride in what they did—they had to put a health system back in place. They had to put a public education system back in place, and they did so in an incredible manner. By moving forward in a balanced manner at this time, it enables us to continue to invest. Because we're growing and being competitive in producing tremendous revenue from the private sector, we will have the wherewithal to continue to reinforce all of what's important to a Liberal government, all of what's important to the people of Ontario, by keeping and making sure our health care system is there for us and our public education system is contributing to the knowledge-based economy. It's a virtuous circle, I would assure the member of the other party.

I'm quite comfortable to speak this morning. It's my first, if I may say, maiden speech in these hallowed halls, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to do so. Sometimes you just need to speak from the heart, and you can see that I used my heart more than my notes today, and I'm very comfortable to do that. I'm out in my community, home in Barrie, like my colleague from Peterborough and all of our colleagues, telling people what we did in this budget, why we did that. I assure you that although there are difficulties, there's a sense that together we can overcome the situation we're in. Yes, everybody seems to know it's tough, but we're Ontario. This is a part of the country that has succeeded since Confederation and this is a part of the country that's always going to be on top. We will be the engine of this country, as we always have been.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It being Holodomor Day today at Queen's Park, I was going to try to be as kind and as nice as I could with the minister's comments. However, she provoked me when she said that we had failed to see what they had done as a party. Today's unemployment figures are out: Another 11,000 Ontario families are without jobs in Ontario. That brings the total since October of last year to 171,000. Think of a town in Ontario that has 171,000 people in it. That's the size of the loss in jobs since October of last year. That's what this government has done for the province of Ontario.

In this past report on unemployment numbers, there are 24,000 manufacturing jobs gone in Canada. Most of those have disappeared in Ontario. The unemployment numbers that have occurred throughout the reign of this government have been increase on top of increase on top of increase. The government's projections are to praise themselves for the increases they have done in social programs and protecting people who are without jobs, and they have done precious little to help companies survive through these unprecedentedly difficult economic times—the worst time that you could ever imagine that someone would actually raise taxes on businesses, forcing another round of problems onto the small businesses here in Ontario. Those kinds of things are going to be remembered as through the Peterson years, when income taxes actually doubled.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the Minister of Culture because I had not heard her speak before in the House, and at the end I understood why: Because after a year and a half she has finally told us what she thinks. I'm so proud of her: I'm so proud of what she had to say, because I often wonder what Liberals stand for. I tell jokes about it on occasion in political speeches. But she wanted to tell us today what differentiated—what Liberal philosophy was. She told us that it's Conservative philosophy in order to accomplish social goals. I think that's what she said in a nutshell, the same kind of economic argument—and to reinforce that, she even chided the members of the Conservative Party for not moving in the correct direction of business that the Liberals are. I think that was refreshing to me, to understand, finally, that she sees her role as a Liberal as being a Conservative who can then do social good with the monies that are made.

Part of the reason I'm saying that is because she waxed eloquent about how some of that money is being spent. She talked about the Ontario child benefit as if that is somehow going to alleviate poverty for the majority of people who live in poverty in this province. Quite frankly, although we on this side of the House and we in the NDP acknowledge that \$42 a month is going to help a child, and some children in this province, what has been done for the overwhelming majority of people who live in poverty is nothing but a shame and nothing of which this government should be proud. You are giving 2% to people who are disabled but you're not giving it until November, so it means for another six months there is no increase whatsoever to them. And in November when they get 2%, they are still abysmally going to live in poverty. Even someone on ODSP, even someone who is disabled, will go from the huge sum of \$999 a month to \$1,019 a month—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Questions and comments?

The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I will respond. My apologies; how long do I have to respond?

Interjection: Two minutes.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Two minutes. I just can't get over the opportunity of speaking in the Legislature, so I'm just going to keep—

Interjection: You've got 15 seconds.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: All right, 15 seconds? All I need to tell you is that what I told you and what you chose to pick from my speech are very much what I believe. I am very proud of this budget and it is exactly for the reasons I gave. It understands business in Ontario. We understand business in Ontario.

You know, the Conservative Party would have you believe that they have a monopoly on understanding business, yet federally, from a former life I once was in, they have done nothing but tax and spend to the point that we didn't have any buffer to handle this recession when it landed on the lap federally. But this government inherited a \$5.2-billion deficit from these wonderful Conservatives that I watch every day. What we did, unlike your federal cousins who walked in and blew their surplus, is we walked into your deficit, we fixed it and we paid it off. I watched from afar while this government had the courage to do that. Because they did that, they got to reinvest. They got this government to reinvest in everything that matters to the people of this province, so that when we age we have a health care system. I have children, and now grandchildren, and I know there's one of the best public education systems in the world in this province.

You know, we're the Liberals, and somehow we seem to do things that Conservatives talk about. So, yes, that's what we are; yes, we understand business; yes, we understand social policy, and this budget—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

It being 10:17, the debate on Bill 162 is deemed adjourned.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Dave Levac: I seek unanimous consent from all the members in the Legislature, with the pins provided in the lobby, to wear the "five ears of grain" pin to remind us that the Ukraine remembers and the world acknowledges the remembrance of Holodomor Memorial Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: Today I hope we will be setting history in Ontario, let alone Canada—for the first time a tri-sponsored bill from the members for Parkdale–High Park, Newmarket–Aurora and myself, the member from Brant. In the gallery to witness history are—and please bear with me—Olexander Danyleiko, the Consul General of Ukraine; Volodymyr Paslavskyi, the executive director of the League of Ukrainian Canadians; Borys Mykhaylets, the executive of the League of Ukrainian Canadians;

Orest Steciw, the Holdomor projects coordinator; Chrystyna Bidiak, president of the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women; Halyna Vynnyk, executive of the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women; Andrew Gregorovich, from the Ukrainian National Federation; Oksana Prociuk Ciz, Council of Ukrainian Credit Unions of Canada; Paul Grod, the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress; Marc Shwec, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Toronto; Valentyna Kuryliw, member of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Toronto, famine-genocide committee; Eugene Yakovitch, member of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Toronto, famine-genocide committee; Irene Mycak, chair of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Holodomor commemoration committee; Andriy Wodoslawsky, member of the Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union; Mary Szkambara, president of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations; Bishop Stefan Chmilar; Archbishop Yuriy Kalistchuk; Walter Okipniuk, former president of the Ukrainian Echo newspaper; Harry Nesmasznyj, executive director of the Ukrainian Youth Association; Luba Kaipainen, member of the League of Ukrainian Canadians of London; Mykola Latyshko, Holodomor survivor; Irene Wrzesnewskyj, mother of MP Boris Wrzesnewskyj, the first person to introduce legislation of this kind in the country; Myhajlo Hucman, member of the League of Ukrainian Canadians; Grant Hopcroft, member of the League of Ukrainian Canadians of London; Peter Kryworuk, member of the League of Ukrainian Canadians and chair of the London Holodomor committee; Michael Szepeytk, president of the Ukrainian Echo newspaper; Wsevolod Isajiw, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre; and of course our friend Allan Rewak of Pathway Group.

These are our visitors for today's historic moment.

1020

Mr. Frank Klees: As a co-sponsor of the Holodomor bill, I want to extend greetings to our Ukrainian friends this morning as well. Welcome to this place, and I want to say to them, dyakuju.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to also add my voice to the other voices. Today, we really right an historic wrong. Today, we commemorate those whose spirit fills this place. I know that a cloud of silent witnesses watch as we enact this historic moment and also commemorate those who were lost. Again, I add my voice to the others. Thank you for being here.

REFERRAL OF BILL 147

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the order of the House dated March 5, 2009, referring Bill 147, An Act to proclaim Holodomor Memorial Day, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged and the bill ordered for third reading.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HOLODOMOR MEMORIAL
DAY ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009 SUR
LE JOUR COMMÉMORATIF
DE L'HOLODOMOR

Mr. Levac moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to proclaim Holodomor Memorial Day / Projet de loi 147, Loi proclamant le Jour commémoratif de l'Holodomor.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1025 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm not sure if they're here yet or not, but I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature, on behalf of the member from Whitby—Oshawa, the family of page Noel Smith: Dena Smith, mother of Noel Smith; Laylah Smith, sister of Noel Smith; and Patrice Ralph, godmother of Noel Smith. Welcome.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to introduce three great volunteers from the city of North Bay here with us today. Helena and Marty Brown are visiting me today, and we're going to go on a lovely tour of the park. Keith Pacey is here today as well from North Bay. All three of them are great volunteers and community supporters and I want to welcome them to the Leg today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I don't know whether she's here or not, but I want to welcome Tammy Tam, the mother of page Carmen Chen from the lovely riding of Markham—Unionville.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce visitors in the west members' gallery. The first one is Bill Jeffery, who's from the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, Mrs. Kathleen White-Williams from the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, and Mrs. Connie Harrison, who's a low-income Ontarian. They are here today to support my private member's bill.

Hon. Jim Watson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, Ottawa city council bestowed an honour on our colleague the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur by naming a street after our colleague from Ottawa—Vanier. We wanted to congratulate her. It is rue Madeleine Meilleur Way. Congratulations.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais présenter et remercier le page Daphnée Dubouchet-Olscheski, qui est de la circonscription d'Ottawa—Vanier, pour le beau travail qu'elle a fait. Ses parents étaient ici il y a quelques jours. Je sais que c'est sa dernière journée, alors je voudrais la remercier pour son travail.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce to the Ontario Legislative Assembly my colleague Charlie Angus, the

federal member of Timmins—James Bay, who's here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Sault Ste. Marie and page Sarah Nadon, I'd like to welcome her mother, Barbara, her father, Maurice, her sister Jayme, her sister Kayla and her grandmother Ida LeClaire, sitting in the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the Minister of International Trade and page Michele D'Agnillo, I'd like to welcome his mother, Tina, his father, John and his brother Christian, sitting in the members' gallery today. Welcome.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today two parliamentarians from the Legislative Assembly of Goias, Brazil: Mr. Jose Nelto Lagares das Mercez and Ms. Vanuza Valadares. They are accompanied by their spouses, Ms. Monica Costa Lagares and Mr. Eronildo Lopes Valadares. The group is also accompanied by the Deputy Consul General of Brazil at Toronto, Mr. Aldemo Garcia, and Ms. Maria Julia Adshead, consular staff. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, you should do an exchange program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member just asked about an exchange program. I received a very warm invitation for members to visit Brazil—

Interjection: Peter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): —and I know the member from Welland would love to participate.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to ask all members to take an opportunity to say thank you to this group of pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think we need to acknowledge that they set a new record in the delivery of the budget at 20.35 seconds. On behalf of the members of the Ontario Legislature and all staff here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, we want to say thank you very much to all of you. We wish each of you all the best in your future endeavours and we trust that one day we will see you here as members. Thank you to each and every one of you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, I'd like to read a quote from something that Premier McGuinty said while in opposition: "I think the government ought to be putting before us a clear plan which shows that we are proceeding surely, inexorably towards the elimination of the

deficit.” Minister, in the past two weeks, in opposition day debates our caucus has provided you with ample opportunity to do just exactly as your leader suggested: provide Ontarians with a plan of what you’re doing toward the elimination of your long-term deficit, and ongoing detailed monitoring of the budget’s implementation. There are no accountability measures in your budget, so why has your caucus voted against measures you previously supported? Do they not feel their constituents deserve to know what you’re doing, or are they simply bankrupt of courage and conviction?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for his question. I’d refer him to page 89 of the budget, which details a number of the measures we are taking with respect to that. I’d also remind the member of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which this party passed subsequent to taking office in early 2004 and which provided, for the first time, meaningful accountability. We were the first government to submit our budget figures to the auditor for approval, prior to the last election, so that there would be no hidden deficit that was unreported. We’ve taken a number of other steps over the years which I will detail in greater depth.

I would remind the member that governments at all levels around the world are experiencing enormous challenges as a result of falling revenues. But we have laid out a very clear plan and we’ve provided a number of accountability measures that are among the leading in the world in terms of deficit and debt.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We know about the fine words of this government and their representatives. They will say one thing to get elected and then arrogantly do the opposite in government and treat taxpayers like yokels: “Let them eat cake.” We have proposed reasonable accountability measures similar to those supported by your federal Liberal colleagues in Ottawa and to what Mr. McGuinty demanded from the former government when he was sitting in this chair.

Minister, less than two years ago, the Auditor General described your government spending controls as among the worst he’d ever seen. We all remember Slushgate, don’t we? Minister, once again, why are you and your do-as-they’re-told backbenchers rejecting clear and transparent measures that will ensure that taxpayers’ money is well spent?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that there is a section in the budget entitled “The Plan to Eliminate the Deficit.” I would further remind the member opposite that this is the second time we have had to eliminate a deficit. When we came to office we found a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit that the former Provincial Auditor indicated was there. We then brought in the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act to give the public greater assurance that in fact the budget that the government lays out is entirely transparent and clear. We took our budget, before the election, to the auditor and had that sign-off.

I would remind the member that we balanced the last three budgets in Ontario and have paid down more than

\$6 billion in debt. The plan we’ve laid out is the appropriate plan, over the right amount of time, to ensure we get Ontario back to a balanced situation.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: When they formed government, they inherited a potential deficit and then spent like Duncan sailors to make sure it happened.

Ontario taxpayers have every right to be cynical about this government’s promises and their spending practices. They plan to spend billions of tax dollars and keep the details behind the curtains. We’ve just heard recently how they threw scarce tax dollars to the wind with their failed eHealth strategy, inflated salaries, opulent office renovations, entertainment and travel expenses and other slaps in the face to taxpayers.

Minister, prove that you and your colleagues are not bankrupt of integrity and conviction, that your Premier’s words were truthful and sincere. Bring in accountability measures proposed by us and supported by your federal Liberal colleagues.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think that the people of Ontario recognize the enormous challenge before every jurisdiction in the world in terms of deficit and debt. I think they understand why Alberta has a \$4-billion deficit for the coming year. I think they understand why the federal government has a \$62-billion deficit over the next two years, and it’s still rising. And I think they understand why Ontario has taken the steps they have.

What they don’t understand is an opposition party that added \$48 billion to the provincial debt during times of strong economic growth. That’s what they don’t understand. They don’t understand how a government that presents a budget at the Magna plant in north Toronto could have a hidden deficit, as identified by the previous auditor, of \$5.6 billion. They don’t understand why it took until our government came to power that we had true fiscal transparency and accountability and enshrined it in legislation.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I have a question for the Minister of Health Promotion, also known as the minister who refers or doesn’t answer questions. Yesterday, my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk pointed out the increased costs your government has added to gym memberships and related products through the latest McGuinty tax grab. Minister, do you not agree that Ontarians should be able to afford the cost of being active, staying in shape and being healthy? Do you not agree?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for the question. Certainly this government has a priority of investment in the health and the activities related to the health of the people of Ontario. In this regard, we have continued to move forward with our \$20-million annual investment in the healthy eating and active living strategy for the after-school program.

We continue to invest in a number of different initiatives to support Ontarians to live and to continue to live healthy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Minister, on your ministry website, it states, “The ministry encourages involvement in sport, recreation and physical activity for the health, social, and economic benefit of Ontarians and the communities in which they live.” I want to illustrate what painful effects Dalton’s new sales tax is having on Ontarians who want their kids to be active: Windsor co-ed hockey registration, an extra \$31; a yearly public swimming pass for a family in Oakville, \$76 in Dalton tax added; Dalton’s tax will cost recreational rowers in Guelph an added \$52 for every boy and girl; North Bay girls’ hockey association—the fees will jump a whopping \$55 a player.

Minister, can you confirm these increased costs for families who want their kids to be active, or will you tell us today that you will make sure Dalton’s newest tax doesn’t cost them an extra penny? Will do you that?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government has come up with a very comprehensive tax plan to address the many issues that face the province of Ontario. These issues are not unique to Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our issues are not unique to the province of Ontario, nor are they unique to Canada. We are facing a global economic crisis, and as a result our government has implemented a comprehensive tax plan. Our government continues to be committed to the issues relating to sports and recreation and to keeping people physically active. That’s why we continue to invest in our physical activities strategy. It’s important, as part of our commitment to keep Ontarians physically active—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Some of my colleagues said that this minister’s response to the economic crisis is “Make the kids pay.” That should be embarrassing to her and her colleagues.

The role of the Minister of Health Promotion is to provide the tools for people to get healthy and stay active. Dalton’s new sales tax is a massive attack on her main ministry directive. Today, in one of the major papers, there is an article that indicates that Dalton’s new sales tax will cost the Greater Toronto Hockey League an extra \$500,000—a half-million-dollar Dalton tax grab to just one sports association, that they have to absorb.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member—we’ve had the issue of dealing with names. I certainly have allowed you to use the Premier’s name when you’ve described the government, because previous government did that. But we haven’t got to using first names.

Stop the clock, please.

I would just ask that you not use the first name of an individual member, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I respect that, Speaker.

It’s a half-million-dollar McGuinty tax grab to just one sports association.

Minister, where have you been on this issue? Why have you remained silent? Do you not understand that this newest sales tax is discouraging families from being able to afford to sign their kids up for baseball, ringette, hockey and soccer? Do you not understand—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would advise member opposite that families in the Amherstburg area will soon be able to skate, run and cheer at a new multi-use sports complex. The construction of this complex will create up to 240 jobs.

This government continues to invest in new sport complexes. This complex will feature two hockey rinks, two recreational fields and two baseball diamonds.

We continue our additional investments in other sports and physical activities. We continue to invest in different initiatives aimed at keeping people active and healthy in the province of Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The McGuinty government has no idea how to respond to the economic crisis facing communities across Ontario. At precisely the time that the Ontario auto workers are most in need of protection, this government is turning its back on them by making it illegal for Ontario’s pension backup fund to run a deficit. Why is this government moving to cut the support net for pensioners when they need it the most?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government is not cutting the pension benefits guarantee fund. I think we need to be honest—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think that all of us in this Legislature need to be honest with the people of Ontario that for 30 years, the pension benefits guarantee fund has not been funded.

I think we need to remind those people whose pensions are threatened—and they are threatened—that General Motors was given an exemption from even contributing to the pension benefits guarantee fund.

Mr. Peter Kormos: By whom? By Bob Rae.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I don’t think we should be hurling partisan insults. We should look at the facts. Our government is committed to working with the CAW, General Motors and the federal government to ensure that pensions are protected. There has to be an adequate

commitment from all sides to this. The issue is serious. The issue is how we fund it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For five years now, myself and other New Democrats have been on their feet urging this government to make fundamental reforms to the pension benefits guarantee fund and the pension system in this province. What we are talking about now are the retirement monies owed to loyal workers in this province, workers who have given a lifetime to their employer. Just when they need a helping hand from their government the most, this government pulls the rug out from underneath them by tightening the rules designed to protect Ontario's pensions. Why is this government turning its back on Ontario families just at the time when they need it the most?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier reiterated the government's commitment to funding pension shortfalls. What we need, however, is an honest look at how we're going to fund it. The pension deficit associated with GM alone is in the billions of dollars. Then you have to look at other defined benefit plans, and then you have to consider those people who don't have a pension, those seniors and others who have seen their retirement income diminished, in some cases by 30% or 40%.

We want to work with the CAW. Mr. Lewenza said today—and he's absolutely right—and we've been saying this for a number of weeks: The best way to protect those plans is to keep the companies working. Our money is at the table. We continue to be at the table with the union, with the company and with the federal government. We will work through this, but we need to have a completely candid discussion about how much it costs and where the money is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What Mr. Lewenza said, and perhaps the minister should know this—this is a quote from a letter he sent to the government today: "It is quite disturbing to see a budget announcement which appears to signal a retreat from the purpose and spirit in which the PBGF has operated for almost 30 years in this province."

This government has had five years—more than five years—to fix a pension backup fund that has been broken for a very, very long time. We would agree on that part. I was personally on my feet in this Legislature many, many times, urging the government to take action. Almost five years ago, the first time I got up in this House to talk about pension plans—some few weeks after I was first elected—I was talking about these issues, and now we see the first significant change that this government is prepared to make is to cut the support net, just as GM and Chrysler are teetering on the edge of bankruptcy.

I repeat: Why is this government turning its back on hundreds of thousands of workers when they need them the most?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If the leader of the third party would take enough time to stop patting herself on the back, we might be able to have a serious discussion about this matter.

I would remind the member opposite that further in that letter and further into the press release, Mr. Lewenza has signalled that the CAW wants to work with governments, and we are committed to working with them. My officials will be meeting with CAW officials early next week.

This is a challenging time. This government remains there with money; we remain there with commitment to keeping these industries viable; and we remain there, committed to helping ensure that these pensions continue to be in place for the workers at General Motors and, indeed, workers all over the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Deputy Premier: The Premier himself seems all too content to talk as if the bankruptcy of GM is imminent. Today, of course, we all heard Ken Lewenza and CAW workers speaking very loudly and very clearly, and they told this government the best way to protect pensions is to keep the auto jobs alive in this province. Instead of accepting the bankruptcy option as if it is a done deal, why isn't the government ensuring that its multi-billion-dollar restructuring package addresses the company's pension solvency problems?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier reiterated yesterday this government's commitment to keeping those companies viable. I would remind the member opposite that we are the only sub-national jurisdiction at the table with money for the auto sector. The government of Ontario has committed more money to this than the government of Germany, for instance. I'll remind the member opposite that a number of national governments around the world—that many Ontarians aren't even aware of—are at the table with money as well. What we have to do is look at who pays and how much, and we have to try to assure the right balance between the federal and provincial governments, the companies and the unions; everybody working together.

The Premier said yesterday and I reiterate: We want to continue to work. We will continue to be there with substantial investments to keep these companies viable, and we will continue to be there to keep the pension plans viable as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In today's National Post, Robin Somerville of the Centre for Spatial Economics said: "There is no reason to expect a happy ending from a bankruptcy procedure. It could well degenerate into the complete collapse of all three companies."

Deputy Premier, we're talking about tens of thousands of jobs that sustain dozens of communities across the

province, yet this government seems to be embracing the likelihood of GM's bankruptcy. Auto workers across the province are justifiably outraged. Instead of focusing on bankruptcies, why doesn't the McGuinty government use its auto assistance package to address GM's pension solvency problem?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd just remind the member that the auto assistance package wouldn't even cover a fraction of it. That's the reality, and there's no easy way out of this. In fact, one of the challenges we have is that this is largely being driven in Washington. We don't know where the top is going to be. We know now that we have committed—the governments of Canada—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Blame Flaherty, blame Washington—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They want to make a joke about it, but I tell you this is as serious a matter as we are going to deal with in this House.

We are at the table. We are the only sub-national government at the table with money. We are prepared to invest still more, but we need to make clear and continue to work with the CAW, with our federal counterparts and with the government of Barack Obama and the United States to ensure that we protect the footprint of the industry. These are difficult times, but this government will keep the interests of our retirees—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today, GM cut 50 more engineering jobs at its research and development centre in Oshawa—another blow to Oshawa families. Letting GM go into bankruptcy could spell even more pain for auto communities and would prevent Ontario from securing the auto jobs of the future, and everybody is aware of that.

But what we need from our government, what we need from the government of Ontario is a proactive solution, not a wait-and-see approach. Why won't the McGuinty government work with the federal government, with GM and with the CAW to design an auto assistance package that addresses the pension solvency problem?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have been very proactive with the industry. If the member thinks for one moment that the decision around bankruptcy is going to be up to her or me, she really doesn't understand the depth or the gravity of the situation.

I cannot overemphasize the challenge before us, and if we attempt to trivialize it, if we attempt to suggest—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Welland.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If we attempt to trivialize the challenge, we're not helping anyone. We have been proactive. We're the only sub-national government with money on the table.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Toyota.

Interjection: He's out of control.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The minister drives a Toyota.

Interjection: Well, I've got a Ford with less—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member, if we are going to get into this little game of who is driving what, then I would encourage everybody to do the survey around the room of who is driving what.

Mr. Peter Kormos: My Chevy S10 is parked outside.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Fine. And my Equinox that's built in Ingersoll is parked outside too.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: It is a serious matter; it is a complex matter that involves governments around the world. This government will continue to work with the CAW, and this government will continue to put the interests of our auto workers and our retirees at the front of the line. There's no easy answer, but we will be there with money and with patience to see our industry through this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for Minister of Tourism, and perhaps I could give her a moment to get to her place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is simple. I would ask the minister, in the lead-up to the budget, when she learned of the plans to bring in a harmonized 13% sales tax—what people are calling McGuinty's new sales tax—what did she do to stand up for the tourism and hospitality industry in the province of Ontario?

1100

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I want to thank the member for the question. We are, in the tourism industry, very delighted with the budget and the benefits that we see for tourism across the province. We are seeing substantial investments in many of our attractions across the province through the budget.

Last Friday, I had the opportunity to be in Morrisburg, where we announced \$13 million to revitalize Upper Canada Village and Chrysler's Farm, leading up to the 1812 commemoration; then, \$10 million going into Fort Henry in Kingston.

We're also seeing substantial investments in some of our other attractions, and I'm sure that in the supplementary I will have more of an opportunity to talk about what we're doing to promote marketing of all of our attractions and resorts across the province as a result of the changes in the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm told that 33 employees of Upper Canada Village have been laid off; I'm sure they'll be encouraged by that answer.

This year's budget sent a clear signal to the industry that this government isn't listening and doesn't care about tourism. The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association says the provincial budget has "ignored economic reality." Bruce Gravel, president of the Ontario Accommodation Association says, "We deplore the fact that the harmonized sales tax was a deal struck between governments behind closed doors, without the benefit of extensive public consultations first." Yakov Stevens of Tripsetter Inc. asks, "How is a harmonized sales tax that raises the price of travel in Ontario going to boost an industry that is already economically challenged?" Of course, it won't.

My question to the minister is this: Does she really believe that hiking sales taxes in the middle of the extreme economic challenge that we are in now will encourage travel and tourism—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I actually had a chance to meet with Mr. Gravel last weekend. That wasn't what he told me. I have met with a number of representatives from the hotel and motel association. We are working through what the impacts of the harmonized sales tax will be for that sector, but as a benefit of the harmonized sales tax, we are seeing a \$40-million influx in marketing for our regions across the province. This is new money. This is a huge influx of cash and it's going to see marketing increase across the province. It's a huge benefit to the sector.

We're also seeing corporate tax cuts across the province for small businesses. As you know, my opposition critic, small businesses are the backbone of tourism across this province, and they are going to benefit substantially from the corporate tax cuts that we have implemented or we are implementing through this budget.

I'm very proud of this budget and I know that tourism will continue to thrive and grow—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today, Statistics Canada reports that 40,000 more Ontarians, women and men, lost their full-time jobs in March; 170,000 men and women in Ontario have lost their jobs since October. It's not good enough for the McGuinty government to say this is a global crisis. Ontarians need help now.

Why is the McGuinty government raising taxes on families and handing out \$2 billion in corporate income tax cuts, instead of protecting good jobs in our province?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There's no doubt that the challenge we heard about today with additional job loss is of great concern, and that is precisely why we are investing \$32.5 billion in infrastructure over the next two

years. That's why we invested \$9 billion last year. That's why we gave a retroactive tax rebate to our manufacturers last summer. That's why we gave \$1 billion last November to every municipality in this province to get infrastructure going.

These are difficult and challenging times, and that is why we have made working families, the people who are worried about their jobs, the people who lost their jobs our top priority, and we will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Men and women in Ontario are losing their jobs at an alarming rate. The manufacturing sector has been gutted. Almost 24,000 jobs were lost in March alone. Unemployment rates are up across the province. Ontario workers want leadership and a jobs plan from this government, not tax cuts to the companies that are already holding their own.

When will this government finally develop an effective plan to protect the jobs and pensions of struggling Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The fact remains that we are in the midst of a world recession. We saw unemployment go up more in Ontario than in British Columbia and Alberta. We even saw unemployment go up in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

There are no easy answers, as the member would like us to say. We have laid out \$34 billion in stimulus, \$32.5 billion in infrastructure. We have laid out more money for skills training and retraining and literacy. We will continue to make those investments.

I hope the member opposite won't continue to vote against those important initiatives which will in fact benefit working families—men, women and children right across Ontario.

CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Mike Colle: A question to the Minister of Culture: Minister, Ontario's cultural attraction agencies like the Royal Ontario Museum attract more than three million tourists and generate \$4.5 billion annually to Ontario's economy, making cultural tourism an important economic driver. However, funding for Ontario's world-renowned cultural agencies like the ROM has been frozen for years. Recently, the Ontario tourism competitiveness study recommended that the government invest in cultural attraction agencies so they can compete on the international stage and create jobs.

Would the minister tell us what steps the government is taking to ensure that Ontario cultural agencies receive sustainable funding so they can attract even more tourists to Ontario and create more jobs?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Yesterday at the Royal Ontario Museum, I was delighted to announce that our government is boosting Ontario's economy by investing \$43 million in new funding to six of Ontario's world-class cultural agencies. These agencies include the Art Gallery of Ontario, the ROM, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, the Ontario Heritage Trust, the Ontario Science Centre and the Royal Botanical Gardens.

This milestone investment provides new and permanent increases to their annual operating grants, the first in over a decade. These world-class facilities, collections and programs of Ontario's cultural agencies raise the global profile of the province by showcasing the best of our cultural diversity and creativity. These are important investments in our cultural industry and they help deliver—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary? The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Ontarians will be pleased to hear that this government is making smart investments to boost Ontario's economy by investing in its cultural attractions and agencies.

Constituents in my riding of Oakville will be especially pleased to learn that the Royal Botanical Gardens is going to receive new and permanent increases to its annual operating budget. As one of the world's largest botanical gardens, it's a major cultural tourist attraction in the region.

As a former board member myself and as all of my fellow south-central colleagues on all sides of this House will attest, the RBG's beauty attracts visitors from all over the world, and that contributes to the local economy and to jobs.

Would the minister tell the constituents of my riding and all the people of south-central Ontario just how much funding the Royal Botanical Gardens will receive this year?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: As I mentioned, our government recognizes that Ontario cultural agencies play a key role in stimulating our economy and local economies like south-central Ontario's. Our government invested \$4 million this year to help enhance the Royal Botanical Gardens and to continue to develop world-class programs that attract visitors from Canada and abroad.

We know that cultural attractions like the RBG are vital to the growth of our knowledge economy. We know that cultural attractions make our province a magnet for knowledge workers and businesses that are looking for dynamic, vibrant communities, so we moved as a government to reinforce the RBG and the cultural industry within the framework of a budget that gets it right.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, yesterday you spent half your allotted time at the hearings for Bill 150 trying to discredit the report recently released from London Economics International concerning the astronomical increases in electricity prices we can expect under your legislation. Given your verbose protest but lack of any real evidence to contradict the report, we can surmise that they must have it right.

The Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association was also there yesterday, concerned for the future of Ontario jobs and, in fact, its entire economy under your act. When you were drafting this bill, you didn't even

consult with a \$24-billion industry, employing 80,000 people in this province, for their views on how you and your act could decimate business in Ontario. Minister, why would you proceed without even talking to the people in this integral industry?

1110

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I believe there was also acknowledgment from that very same group that the honourable member quotes that they were pleased that one of the strong signals we sent was our government's intention to invest alongside industry and commercial operations to lower their overall energy use with direct investment. The honourable member leaves that out.

To the point about the contracted study by executive summary that's been released so far by that group of consultants, the concerns that I raised remain exactly the same. They apportion costs in a way that costs are not apportioned in the energy sector: they didn't amortize them over the life of the asset, as is the normal case; they counted the costs for conservation programs but gave no benefit for reduced consumption on the bills of individuals; they assumed that increases in green energy will not replace other costs; and their very own study fluctuated wildly. I think for all of those reasons, it raises serious—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, they did talk about energy efficiency and how you have not been doing enough to promote that in their industry. They also use 10% of the electricity produced in this province—10%. They believe that this province could benefit a whole lot more if as much money was invested in making their businesses and other energy-intensive businesses more efficient as what you plan to spend on building new generation—unreliable, undispatchable generation at twice the cost. Why wouldn't you, under your green disguise, do more to promote helping an industry be more efficient and more competitive and in fact create jobs in this province? Why wouldn't you consult with them? Why would you proceed? It's a \$24-billion industry with 80,000 jobs and 10% of the electricity in the province, and you couldn't even talk to them. Is this more about politics against policy in McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's always good when the honourable member is so excited that he gets tongue-tied.

I think that at the heart of it—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. There have been a few comments that have been indirectly made to members.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, we do need to ensure that we treat one another with respect. Sly little comments like that don't help. There are others that have been made. I just ask everyone to be conscious of it.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that what we have is a comment from the honourable member on two points

that I would like to focus on. First off, he talks about new generation, but yesterday in the House he was proposing that we just sign a contract for new generation on the nuclear front without regard for cost, without regard for reliability. But I think what's very—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member just asked the question. I trust you want to listen to the response—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please have some respect for the Chair.

Hon. George Smitherman: Part of the cost associated with the \$5-billion incremental investment in the first three years of the Green Energy Act is \$900 million of investment in conservation programs, with large companies exactly like those that were represented yesterday.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. In the last month, St. Joseph's hospital in Hamilton has faced three superbug outbreaks, causing dozens of people to fall ill and some, tragically, to pass away.

St. Joseph's hospital faced a deficit of \$12 million, and because of inadequate resources, St. Joseph's has outsourced and cut back on its cleaning staff. Without mandatory provincial cleaning standards and resources to meet those standards, hospital patients are at risk in the very places where they go to get better. Will the minister commit to introducing mandatory cleaning standards in this province?

Hon. George Smitherman: On behalf of the Minister of Health, I think there are a few messages that would be very, very important to convey. First and foremost is the recognition that we are, in institutional settings, increasingly battling pervasive bugs. Associated with that is the solemn obligation on the part of all of us who are in those environments to be very, very vigilant on the issue of handwashing. It seems trite, but it's the strongest effort that is available to help to counteract these challenges.

On the issue of hospital budgets, St. Joe's has this year, as they have every other year that we have been in office, received more resources for their budget. That was a pattern that the Ontario Hospital Association accepted.

On matters of superbugs and the like, we're depending upon the leadership of Dr. Michael Baker from the University Health Network, who's guiding efforts to enhance the security and circumstances in Ontario's hospitals, where we recognize vulnerable patients need all the help that can be offered to protect them against these bugs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government's plan for infection control in hospitals simply doesn't make any sense. While the government is pouring money,

on the one hand, into a mandatory infectious disease reporting system, they're failing to protect patients from infections in the first place. I'm not talking about handwashing here, I'm talking about cleaning staff. I'm talking about in-house cleaning staff and services. The research is very, very clear and this particular minister, I'm sure, knows it. In-house, adequate cleaning staff and mandatory standards are the building blocks of a healthy hospital. Will this government take action today before another death needlessly occurs?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I think it's important to note that in the time period of 1990-95, the government of the day did allow outsourcing, similarly, of a wide variety of services in the hospital environment. I think that it's very important to note that several of the individuals who are over there must have been quite quiet on that point if they were concerned about it.

There is a new public reporting of infections that does enhance the transparency associated with these circumstances in hospitals. While I acknowledge that the quality of the cleaning that's going on in those environments is of course important, we have increased the operating budgets for all those places.

Although the honourable member chooses to say that it's not an important focus, we do think that, for anyone who is in a hospital environment, being very vigilant on the issue of handwashing is known to be the single biggest thing that can be done to protect against the spread of superbugs and other infections.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Many of my constituents run businesses, both big and small, and like any good business they're constantly looking for new customers and contracts. The government of Ontario is a buyer of literally thousands of goods and services, ranging from construction materials to dinnerware and anything in between. I understand that a buy-Ontario policy for all of our goods would not be feasible; the last thing our businesses need right now are walls around our province, potentially preventing many of them from exporting to other places. However, we can't lose sight of the fact that Ontario businesses are some of the best in the world, so we should be encouraging them to do business with Ontario. My question to the minister is this: What support is this government now providing to our businesses that are interested—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thank you for the question. I just want to say that our government certainly recognizes the importance of doing business with strong Ontario companies. We support businesses. In fact, just on Monday, we held a Supply Ontario reverse trade show, where we had over 900 vendors come and speak to government representatives from ministries, agencies and the broader public sector to learn just how they go about doing busi-

ness with the Ontario government. It gave these businesses an excellent opportunity to pick up some tips, to learn of some of the emerging needs and get some tips on how to market their solutions. I spoke to a number of the vendors, who expressed absolute delight that the government was taking this proactive action. Our vendors were pleased and it was so successful that we had a waiting list of 400. We intend to do it again in the fall.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Sounds like the event would have been very beneficial for the both the potential vendors and the government representatives.

I agree with the minister: It's key for both our businesses and government that they're on the same page when it comes to the purchasing needs of the government of Ontario. But some businesses would not have been able to come to Toronto for this event to meet with your government representatives. To the minister: Can he tell this House if the government is taking any other steps to reach out to Ontario businesses that are interested in doing business with Ontario, perhaps for those who couldn't make it to Monday's event?

1120

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to answer that question. In fact, Monday's event wasn't the first outreach initiative on the part of this government. In the last year alone, we've held over 40 vendor events with various chambers and boards of trade, working closely with the Ministry of Small Business as well and our enterprise centres—some 1,400 vendors from all across the province. I've done sessions myself in Ottawa and Thunder Bay. They're very well-attended sessions. So clearly we're reaching out to businesses.

It's nothing new for us to do that. We've been doing it for some time, and frankly, the proof's in the pudding. Of the 45,000 vendors who do business with the province of Ontario, over 95% of them are strong Ontario companies.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Of course, right now we have committee hearings and there's a lot of concern about Bill 150. People are particularly shocked to hear that Bill 150 does not address health concerns, because the health of Ontarians should surely be considered in important government policy decisions where the potential impact is widely reported by independent professionals with expertise.

Dr. Nina Pierpoint's research, which has worldwide support, states, "Wind turbines of the size you are contemplating do ... cause harm to human health when placed within two kilometres of people's homes."

I ask you, Minister, why are you and your Premier not addressing the health concerns of the bill?

Hon. George Smitherman: First of all, I think that the party which is demonstrating through this debate that they are back in favour of coal and that coal is back in favour with them, and is really asking a serious question

to a former health minister when the Ontario Medical Association has said that 2,000 to 3,000 people in the province of Ontario die prematurely because of coal—why has the honourable member's party reversed course and is now back in favour of coal as part of our generation mix in the province of Ontario?

In the supplementary, I'll look forward to the opportunity to explain to the honourable member how the process will involve the Ministry of the Environment in helping to establish the most appropriate and standardized setbacks associated with wind turbines in the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to let the minister know that it was our party—in fact, I was Minister of the Environment at the time when we made the decision to close Lakeview, which we did ahead of time, and also had a plan to eliminate the coal plants.

But I would say to you, your refusal to acknowledge the health concerns and risks in this bill flies in the face of worldwide evidence to the contrary. As you know, the health and safety of people is impacted by wind turbines. They can induce sleep disturbance, depression, migraines, nausea and memory loss. Dr. Robert McMurtry, the former dean of medicine at the University of Western Ontario, has asked, why will the government not proceed with an epidemiological study of the health risks and impacts before moving forward? Why won't you do the right thing?

Hon. George Smitherman: I take it that the honourable member's silence on the matter of the debate which has occurred—which has seen at least six or seven members of that caucus stand up and say, "We support coal on an ongoing basis in the province of Ontario." Why did she refuse to speak to that in her question?

On the matter with respect to the health concerns on wind turbines, firstly, I say that I had the chance to meet with Dr. McMurtry, someone whom I know well, and I've indicated that I'll look forward to continuing to work with him. The Ministry of the Environment, as part of this process, will establish, based on worldwide science, the very best recommendations, on a standardized basis, around setbacks from wind turbines to replace the patchwork quilt which has emerged in the province of Ontario, where some municipalities have established setbacks at 300 metres and others at higher amounts. We think that we should use the best available science to establish standardized setbacks, and that's what the Ministry of the Environment will have the responsibility to do if the Legislature passes Bill 150.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Housing. On Sunday, a Toronto Star editorial called on the housing minister to implement a comprehensive provincial housing strategy now. It called for immediate action to help the 600,000 renters in Ontario who pay too much of their income on rent to make ends meet. This morning, I introduced a motion calling for the govern-

ment to freeze rents for one year to help those struggling men and women and children to put food on their tables and keep their homes. Will the minister support this motion and freeze rents for one year in Ontario?

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm very proud of the track record of this government. I mentioned, the last time I had a question from the honourable member, what the rent increase regime looked like under their government, under the Conservative government and under the McGuinty government.

The fact of the matter is that of all three political parties, the McGuinty government, on average, has made the lowest rent increase under the guideline, and we're very proud of that.

I'm also very pleased that we're working co-operatively with the federal government, our municipal partners and the not-for-profit sector to develop a comprehensive long-term affordable housing strategy. Part of that strategy is the fact that the federal government is now back in the housing business. Minister Duncan, in his last budget, announced that we will match by \$622 million a plan to create affordable housing in this province. We're proud of that plan. We look forward to working and getting the shovels—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would remind the Minister of Housing that we in the New Democratic Party are no fans of the Liberal Bob Rae, either.

This is an extraordinary time of need in Ontario. There is an urgency on this issue that the minister doesn't seem to appreciate. Men and women in Ontario are losing their jobs now. Ontarians can't keep waiting for the government to develop a housing strategy sometime in the future. Freezing rents in Ontario for one year would cost the government nothing, but it would offer some hope and protection to families who are living in hunger and fear of eviction.

Why won't the minister show a sense of urgency, and commit to support a rent freeze immediately?

Hon. Jim Watson: I always find it amusing when the membership of the NDP try to distance themselves from the leader who brought them to power for the first and only time. In fact, there are three members of the current caucus of the NDP—

Mr. Paul Miller: That's because you screwed up again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member will withdraw the comment, please. Withdraw the comment. Withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A straight withdrawal would be appreciated.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Jim Watson: Members of the current NDP caucus were very happy to receive a car and driver under the

Bob Rae government, and they served in cabinet with him.

We're proud of the fact that we're going to be investing \$1.2 billion in affordable housing over the course of the next two years: \$704 million for repairing social housing and making them more energy-efficient, \$365 million to create more affordable housing units for low-income seniors and the disabled, and \$175 million for the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program.

I challenge the honourable members to vote for the budget—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Agriculture is a major economic driver in our province. Crop and live-stock sales total close to \$9 billion per year. The agri-food sector generates more than \$33 billion annually and employs approximately 700,000 people.

Rural Ontario needs our support to invest in infrastructure which will create jobs in the short term and enhance Ontario's productivity in the long term. Investments are needed in research and innovation to move our agriculture sector forward and allow it to remain competitive by taking advantage of new technologies.

The health of the economy in rural Ontario is essential to bringing back growth throughout the province. Farmers and small-town Ontarians need to know that the government is on their side.

How does the 2009 budget help farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I very much appreciate the question from the honourable member from Guelph.

I would say to all of the members of this Legislature that the budget demonstrates a very clear commitment on the part of the McGuinty government to support the agriculture sector and farmers particularly.

Many farmers will benefit significantly from the single sales tax structure. Farmers would no longer pay sales tax on things like trucks, light vans and parts, furniture, lawnmowers, computers, computer services, freezers, and other equipment that they would purchase for their farm operations. They will now be on a level playing field with farmers from other provinces who have the HST already in place.

I think it's also important to remember that farmers will benefit from our tax relief for small businesses, including small business corporate income tax—

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Our budget is delivering for Ontario families to help them get through this challenging economic climate. I know that our government has made significant progress for the people of rural Ontario since taking office in 2003. We have provided support for farmers and funding for rural infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, and supported rural economic development. Now more than ever, Ontarians need to know that their

government will continue to work for them and that the budget will provide the support needed to help get our economy moving again.

Could the minister tell this House about some of the other programs that are already working for rural Ontario, and how our investments are achieving results?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We invest significantly to support farmers particularly, but some of our other investments benefit the entire agri-food sector. This year we plan to invest \$8 million to encourage increased consumption of Ontario-grown and -processed foods in the broader public sector. The budget includes an additional \$1.5 million to develop a new agri-food research centre focused on livestock and crop production, renewable energy, nutrition and health. We will also add \$1 million to our summer jobs program. Investing in rural Ontario has been a priority, and we will continue to invest in rural infrastructure.

In February of this year, Canada and Ontario announced the first 289 projects of the Build Canada fund. This is a program that will deliver \$1 billion in infrastructure investment in rural—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The question is for the Deputy Premier. Last week Ontarians were rightly shocked and disgusted to read that once again a person with a violent criminal history repeatedly breached court orders but was somehow granted bail, which the crown never appealed, and while on bail brutally murdered the woman who was his previous victim and who our justice system was supposed to protect. Arsei Hindessa was convicted of the second-degree murder of Natalie Novak and awaits sentencing on May 25.

The law compels a life sentence for such a crime, and the only issue to be resolved is how long he must serve before being eligible for parole. For second-degree murder, the law permits the court to order anywhere from 10 to 25 years of parole ineligibility.

I know the minister does not direct the actions of prosecutors on specific cases, but I ask him to confirm that there are no hidden policies or secret departmental directives that would in any way prevent the crown from seeking the maximum period of 25 years. Will he confirm that to this House?

Hon. George Smitherman: I sense from the question, obviously, that the member has got some background on it that I don't have. As it is a matter that has ongoing engagement with the criminal justice system, it is an area where typically we wouldn't want to offer too much comment.

The key comment of course is the sympathy that we have for circumstances where people have experienced a loss of life, and the family implications are obviously quite extraordinary.

The member did ask, by way of the question, for me to assert that there is nothing that I would know of that

would be hidden direction that would work against what he is asking for. Obviously, I wouldn't want to fall into the trap of pretending to be able to comment on ministerial activities that are the responsibility of others, but I will make sure to take this up with the relevant ministers in our government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: In December of last year, we wrote to the Attorney General and asked him to personally review the conduct of the crown in four cases where persons with long criminal histories were released on bail or were at large and who went on to murder innocent Ontarians. The minister responded with a form letter.

Arssei Hindessa was convicted of brutally and repeatedly assaulting Natalie Novak, and he ended up on probation, with an order to stay away from her. He repeatedly violated that no-contact order and was charged but somehow made bail, and the crown didn't bother to appeal. This isn't just about whether prosecutors are properly prepared for bail hearings or don't appeal bail orders. It's about the Attorney General and his supervisory responsibility to the people of this province. He ducked that responsibility.

Will you now commit to this House that you will direct the Attorney General to personally examine the circumstances of the crown conduct in this case and have him report back to this House?

Hon. George Smitherman: While I am happy to take the question under advisement and to pass that along to the responsible minister, I can't really support the assertion that the honourable member has made. I think that he knows very well that the crown policy manual clearly states that prosecutors should oppose bail in all cases involving serious physical violence and that crown attorneys and police are always motivated to put public safety first and foremost.

These circumstances are very tragic, and our sympathies are there with those who have experienced a loss. I know that the Attorney General will take the question very seriously and will look for an opportunity to be able to respond more directly to the honourable member.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Peter Kormos: A question to the Minister of Transportation, please: The communities of Niagara have been devastated by the loss of manufacturing jobs. The economic development offices in those communities have been struggling to bring replacement industries and manufacturers to Niagara region. Does the minister understand how critical the four-laning of the balance of Highway 406 is to those efforts in those communities? When can we expect to see shovels in the ground?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's a good question. The member has raised this with me, both in the House and privately, as an economic tool to assist in attracting business to his constituency and the whole Niagara region. I'm pleased to inform him that in the last budget, a specific reference was made by the Minister of Finance, I believe, in his speech and certainly in the budget docu-

ments: a commitment for funding to four-lane Highway 406 from its present terminus, which is Port Robinson Road, right through to East Main Street in Welland. That will be done on a staged basis. I expect that we will see some activity in this regard taking place this year and that that will continue on for some period of time.

The mayor of Welland, the regional chair and the member, I know, will be delighted by that news that was contained in the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and page Victoria Carney, to welcome her mother Sylvia Carney, her nana Doris Brown and her papa Homer Brown, seated in the Speaker's gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PASSOVER

Mr. Peter Shurman: Today is the second day of Pesach, known more commonly as Passover. It begins every year on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan and lasts for eight days.

This is a time for celebration and reflection on the exodus from Egypt and the liberation of the children of Israel from slavery. It is a time for family and friends to join in the reading of the Haggadah, that story, and to partake in the Seder meals. The Passover Seder with its symbols and rituals instructs each generation to remember their past while appreciating the beauty of freedom and the responsibility that goes with it.

The Haggadah is the fulfillment of the biblical obligation to recount to our children the story of the exodus on the nights of Passover. We eat matzo to represent the unleavened bread that the Israelites baked to bring with them, leaving in such a hurry that it did not have time to rise.

I, along with many of my constituents and all members of the Jewish community, celebrated the holiday with a Seder last night, and we will be doing so again this evening.

It is my privilege to rise in this House and to wish everyone a joyful and peaceful Pesach. Chag Sameach—happy holiday.

BARBARA LaFLESHE

Mr. Paul Miller: Over the past year and a half, I've had the honour of working with several amazing Hamil-

ton grandmothers who fought hard against the loss of temporary care assistance. Barbara LaFleshe, Erlene Weaver and Diane Chiarelli, all from Hamilton's ROCK group, Raising Our Children's Kids, have given endless hours in the pursuit of having their grandchildren's temporary care assistance reinstated.

Because of Barbara's hours of volunteer labour, the lives of some of Hamilton's most vulnerable families have improved, as they now receive much-needed monthly financial support for their at-risk grandchildren.

I'm very happy today to say that the YMCA in Hamilton recognized this hard work when it announced the nominees for the 2009 Women of Distinction Awards.

In the community development and social activism category, one of ROCK's own, Barbara LaFleshe, has been nominated for her fight for financial rights for grandparents raising their grandchildren. The winners will be announced at a gala dinner on May 5 at the Hamilton Convention Centre.

I know that Barbara will have all of our caucus rooting for her, and I'm sure we'll be joined in our support by the Minister of Community and Social Services and the rest of the members of this Legislature.

Good luck, Barbara LaFleshe. You are certainly a woman of distinction.

MOHAWK COLLEGE

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On February 1, 2009, Rob MacIsaac became Mohawk College's seventh and newest president.

Mohawk has been very fortunate to have a history of strong and passionate leaders who have consistently built on Mohawk's reputation for excellence.

Succeeding Mohawk's former president, the very successful MaryLynn West-Moynes, and interim president Rosemary Knechtel, Mr. MacIsaac has taken the lead of one of Hamilton's prized academic communities and one of Ontario's great colleges.

Mr. MacIsaac's career as mayor of Burlington and chair of Metrolinx has positioned him very well to lead Mohawk. In fact, as president, Mr. MacIsaac will lead a very important part of Hamilton's cultural, social and economic foundation.

Provincially, there is no question that Mohawk is a very important part of Ontario's commitment to building on our world-class post-secondary education system.

It is clear that Mr. MacIsaac shares his vision. As he says, Mohawk "is so important to our community's success" and "building successful communities is my passion."

We are very fortunate to have Mr. MacIsaac as Mohawk's new president, and I look forward to working with him as he builds on Mohawk's legacy of success.

EARTHQUAKE IN ITALY

Mr. Ted Arnott: In the early hours of Monday of this week, a 6.3-magnitude earthquake hit the city of

L'Aquila and several towns in the Abruzzo region of Italy covering 230 square miles, killing over 270 people and seriously injuring another 100. The earthquake has left over 30,000 people homeless. Aftershocks persist throughout the region even as rescue efforts to find survivors continue.

It's the worst quake to hit Italy in over 30 years. Over 15,000 buildings were either damaged or destroyed in the 26 cities, towns and villages around L'Aquila, a city with a population of 70,000 which is twinned with the former city of York in Ontario. In the words of the city's mayor, Massimo Cialente, "For now, the needs are basic. The people in the camps don't even have toothbrushes."

One 98-year-old survivor impressed rescue workers with her tremendous fortitude and courage. Trapped beneath rubble for over 30 hours on her bed, she spent the time crocheting. As the firefighters lifted her up, she told them, "At least let me comb my hair."

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, we extend our sincerest condolences to the people of Abruzzo over their tragic loss of family and friends. Theirs is truly a Passion Week of suffering and pain. We join with the international community in our support of relief efforts to assist the survivors and the families of the victims.

I'm glad to say that my wife, Lisa, traces her family history to Italy, and, as such, our sons share the immense pride that comes with an Italian heritage. We also remember the 75,000 Torontonians who trace their roots to the Abruzzo region and are concerned about their family and friends. We applaud their fundraising campaign to aid those affected by the earthquake.

ROUGE PARK

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I rise today to speak about the Rouge Park, which is to a significant measure located in the riding of Pickering-Scarborough East, which I am so very proud to represent.

The Rouge Park is remarkable for its variety of natural landscapes, from the rolling hills of the glacial Oak Ridges moraine, where the Rouge headwaters start, to the vast wetlands and sandy beach where the Rouge flows into Lake Ontario. All the more remarkable is that the Rouge Park is located in part in the cities of Toronto and Pickering and the town of Markham.

The Rouge, as it is affectionately known, is the only remaining wilderness area within this region, and is the largest nature park within an urban area in North America. It is the only large valley land system in the greater Toronto area where people can still enjoy a wilderness experience, since other rivers in the city are now encumbered by urban development.

The Rouge Park was established in 1995 by the province of Ontario. It covers over 12,000 acres and provides protection for the Rouge River watershed. The Rouge Park is an active park that is free for visitors to enjoy, and has numerous visitor and communications programs to experience.

There's been recent talk of making the Rouge Park a national park of Canada. I welcome this discussion, as it

highlights the significance of the Rouge to the people of Toronto, Durham, York region, and, I would suggest, even all of Ontario.

The Rouge Park, as set up by the province of Ontario, is now fully protected and plays a leading role in the ecological preservation and restoration of the Rouge Valley so that it will be enjoyed by all future generations.

LAKE SIMCOE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I have repeatedly told this House that if the government wants to help clean up Lake Simcoe, it needs to start to provide funds to do the job. Now even the government's strongest supporters are calling on you to provide funding. The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition said in a newspaper ad last weekend that you should provide funds.

Lake Simcoe represents a \$200-million economic benefit to the surrounding communities. It is worth supporting.

Our party has told you repeatedly that funding is needed. We told you during debate on the Lake Simcoe Act. During the debate, I said to this House, "Why do you continue to refuse to fund a cleanup for the lake? Your last budget did not provide any funding, this bill will not provide any, and we have no guarantee you will provide any funding in the future." I could make the exact same statement today.

One day, even the environmental community is going to realize that your Lake Simcoe bill was hollow. It was gesture politics, just like the Poverty Reduction Act, the status-of-the-artist act, and so much of your legislation.

Cleaning up Lake Simcoe never needed a new law. It needed a commitment of will and money from this government, neither of which it has received.

1310

VAISAKHI

Mr. Bob Delaney: Vaisakhi is the annual Sikh celebration commemorating the establishment of the Khalsa in 1699. Vaisakhi was created by Guru Gobind Singh-ji in 1699, giving Sikhs a clear and distinguished identity.

Vaisakhi is celebrated each year during the month of April, as it also welcomes the arrival of the spring season, when the yellow mustard fields are in full bloom in the northern Indian province of Punjab.

In Canada, the Sikh community has played a vital role in the building of our province. Sikhs have contributed to Ontario's social, cultural and economic development. Four of my proud legislative colleagues celebrate their Sikh heritage and upbringing, and some 300,000 Sikh Ontarians, in all walks of life, join them during Vaisakhi.

The annual event is celebrated with the Sikh fervour Ontarians have come to know and respect. The Vaisakhi celebrations continue throughout April. Each year, Ontario's proud Sikh community hosts a Vaisakhi parade. This year, it's on April 26, 2009, and I look forward to attending.

"Vaisakhi diyan lakh lakh vidhayaan" to all our Sikh friends and colleagues in the Legislative Assembly and throughout Ontario.

PASSOVER

Mr. Mike Colle: It's certainly wonderful in the Legislature today, reflecting this incredible province that we have, that we are seeing statements today on the Vaisakhi, Passover and Easter. These are wonderful reflections of the diversity of this incredible province and the incredible people we have here.

Today marks the second day of Passover, a time when families gather together at the Seder to tell stories of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, an incredible story of heroism and an incredible story of a people who have overcome so much.

The great lesson of Passover is that change is possible, that how things are now is not how they have to be or will always be. The Seder night is about the idea that things can change and that each small step we take contributes to the slow-working redemption of the world. On this very special day and time in the Jewish calendar, we sit here in solidarity with all the incredible contributions the people of the Jewish faith have made to Canada and the world, and we celebrate Passover with them in our hearts. We mark this important day whether we are in Toronto, Tel Aviv or Torino, Italy. This is a time of reflection, and we reflect in unison with our Jewish brothers and sisters.

EASTER

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today in the House to bring Easter greetings not only to my constituents in Mississauga South but also to the people of Ontario. Easter is a time for families to gather together and spend time with loved ones. In a place as diverse as Ontario, this holiday is celebrated in many different ways.

In Toronto, for example, there is an annual Easter parade, which has become a landmark in many communities in the GTA. The parade travels down College Street and makes its way through Little Italy and Little Portugal. I have fond memories of the parade. Not so long ago, my wife, at the age of six, was an angel on one of those floats, and many young people today look forward to this celebration.

Easter is one of the most important days in the Christian calendar. It is celebrated throughout the world and is a time when Christians reflect on the life and teachings of Christ. It's celebrated through church services, family dinners and annual Easter egg hunts.

Many families gathering for Easter this year are concerned about the global economic situation and are struggling with its effects in their own home. I encourage all members of this House to keep those families in their hearts and to contribute their time or make a donation to their local food bank to help all Ontario families have a happy Easter.

I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all members of this House, their families and all the families across Ontario who will be coming together to celebrate Easter.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding membership for a standing committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I move the following change in membership: on the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, that Mrs. Van Bommel be replaced by Mr. Johnson.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding standing committees membership.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I move that the following change be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: that Ms. Horwath, Hamilton Centre, be replaced by Mme. Gélinas, Nickel Belt; and that the following change be made to the membership of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies: that Mme. Gélinas, Nickel Belt, be replaced by Mr. Hampton, Kenora-Rainy River.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today with a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the possibility of staggering losses in the equity, bond and derivative markets threatens the integrity of workers' pensions; and

"Whereas workers agreed to lower wage increases in favour of pensions and contributions to these pensions by employers, in effect deferring wages to ensure an income at a later date; and

"Whereas funds invested in these pension plans are, in fact, money that belongs to the workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact laws to give workers' and

retirees' pension funds preferred creditor protection in case of bankruptcy or court-mandated corporate restructuring."

I agree with this petition; it's long overdue. I'll be giving it to page Megan.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM_{2.5}); and

"Whereas the average annual PM_{2.5} concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry's air quality index monitoring stations; and

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM_{2.5} concentrations in the Clarkson airshed study area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I affix my signature and provide it to Mark.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes and operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been" very "successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I'm pleased to support this petition and sign it and pass it to page Sarah on her last day in the Legislature.

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on behalf of my hard-working seatmate and colleague from Niagara Falls. It contains the signatures of a number of people who come from the Niagara Falls, Kitchener and Cambridge areas. It reads as follows:

1320

"Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

"Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

"Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

"We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario."

On behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, I'm pleased to sign this petition, to ask page Renée to carry it for us and to thank the pages for their service to the House.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I have a petition on behalf of my colleague Kim Craitor from Niagara Falls. It reads like this:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petitioners so I put my signature on the petition as well.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I always have a good petition here. I've got one in favour of protecting caregivers.

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support MPP Mike Colle's bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I affix my name to this petition.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton"—with second reading debate on May 7—"allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and to pass it to my page, Sean, on his last day.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have petitions from good people from Brampton and Burlington in support of our caregivers and nannies.

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection" in 2001 "for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support" Bill 160, " ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I affix my name to this petition that I support.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition here which has literally thousands of names on it, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly' is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign my name to at least one of these petitions, and pass it to my page, Teresa, on her last day in the Legislature.

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESSCORPORATE REPORTING
REQUIREMENTS

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'll read the resolution:

Be it resolved that, in the opinion of this House, the province of Ontario should undertake a review of

Ontario's current corporate disclosure reporting requirements, standards and compliance therewith, with a particular emphasis on additional financial and non-financial information to ensure that Ontario investors have access to all information material to them in making investment decisions.

That, in undertaking such a review, the Ontario Securities Commission ("OSC") should undertake a broad consultation with its own advisory bodies including the Continuous Disclosure Committee, concerned stakeholders, appropriate interest groups and individuals and other securities regulators, to establish best practice corporate social responsibility ("CSR") and environmental, social and governance ("ESG") reporting standards.

That the OSC seek to develop and adopt an enhanced standardized reporting framework for both quantitative and qualitative social and environmental information to ensure corporate disclosures are understandable, comparable and outcome-focused.

That the OSC shall report back to the Minister of Finance no later than January 1, 2010, with regard to its findings, together with recommendations for next steps to enhance disclosure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Broten moves private member's notice of motion number 81. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Let me start by thanking all of the people and organizations that have helped me arrive at today's resolution, including many who are here today: Eugene Ellmen, executive director of Social Investment Organization; Alan Willis and Julie Desjardins, experts in the field of integrated financial disclosure; Bob Willard, an expert in corporate sustainability; Ed Waitzer, the Jarislowsky Dimma Mooney chair in corporate governance at York University and former chair of the Ontario Securities Commission; Lorraine Smith, a corporate social responsibility adviser; Toby Heaps, editor and chief of Corporate Knights; and I'm also pleased to welcome a number of representatives of the Ontario Securities Commission, all of whom are here to watch today's important debate. Please join me in welcoming them.

I would also like to thank Peter Chapman, the executive director of SHARE; Adine Mees, the president and CEO of Canadian Business for Social Responsibility; Jane Ambachtsheer, the principal of Mercer Investment Consulting; Matthew Kiernan, co-executive of Innovest Strategic Value Advisors; and many others who could not be here today but who offered much valuable information and support.

I think that we can all agree that we are living in tumultuous times. Newspaper headlines around the world and nightly newscasts at home and abroad remind us that we are in the midst of a global economic crisis. Stock markets have crashed; life and retirement savings have been decimated; house prices have fallen; pensions are at risk; jobs have been lost; and businesses that we once

believed would be around forever have collapsed or are on the verge of collapse.

1330

As is often the case, times of difficulty can also present opportunity. The current situation calls for a reassessment of the ways we do business: Do our business and investment decisions reflect our values? Are there ways we can better inform and protect Ontarians? How can we ensure that Ontario will succeed and prosper as we emerge from the current economic downturn? I believe that there are lessons from the past that can guide us today.

The Great Depression of the 1930s forced transparency into the financial marketplace, with securities legislation first being introduced at that time both here and in the United States. The goal of increased regulation and forced transparency was to facilitate and foster better protection for investors by providing them with more information in making decisions.

My grandmother lived through the Great Depression, and she used to talk about the need to save money and be frugal because you never knew what the future would hold. When she passed away a few years ago at 101 years old, I suspect she had never owned a stock or a mutual fund. She might have had a Canada savings bond or a GIC, but mostly she held her savings at the local credit union, where she knew and liked the people and felt that her money was safe. But today, owning stocks and shares directly or indirectly, through mutual funds or pension plans, is as commonplace as having a savings or chequing account, and one of the most disheartening realities of the current economic crisis is that individuals and families who did the right thing by following the lessons of the now-famous Wealthy Barber, who paid themselves first and saved for the future by investing in RRSPs, pension plans or mutual funds, have seen a great deal of their hard-earned savings disappear practically overnight, and they have had little or no control to do anything about it.

We can never make investing a failsafe proposition, but we can ensure that investors have all the information that they need and that that information is set out in a way that is easily understandable, readily comparable and sufficiently complete to allow investors and consumers to make the best decisions possible about what companies they want to invest in or purchase goods from. That is, in my view, what corporate social responsibility reporting and environmental and social governance disclosure is all about: It's a way for companies to be transparent about their business and a way for investors, analysts and advisers to gain answers to a number of important questions: How does company Y treat their employees? Who does company B buy their supplies from? How does company X treat our planet? What kind of neighbour is company C to the community in which it operates? How do various companies compare to their competitors in these areas? What risks are they bearing to their bottom line?

According to Industry Canada, corporate social responsibility is ultimately about delivering improved

shareholder and debtholder value, providing enhanced goals and services for customers, building trust and credibility in the society in which the business operates and becoming more sustainable over the long term. Investors in Canada and around the world are becoming increasingly interested in CSR and ESG considerations in securities selection and portfolio management because they know that these factors are linked to shareholder value. Yet the inadequacy of ESG reporting by corporations and the lack of standardization and comparability of CSR reporting makes it difficult for investors to gather necessary information on the environmental, social and governance profiles of companies, to compare companies and to assess risks and opportunities among companies.

In his book *Investing in a Sustainable World*, Matthew Kiernan supports the chorus of experts who charge that conventional disclosure does not provide the necessary information to be of sufficient value to investors. He describes traditional financial statements as only showing the tip of an iceberg, with much of the critical information remaining hidden below the surface.

In 2005, the United Nations Environment Program Finance Initiative retained the European law firm Freshfields to examine the legal framework of the integration of environmental, social and governance issues into institutional investment. Freshfields concluded that integrating ESG considerations into an investment analysis so as to reliably predict financial performance was clearly admissible and arguably required in all jurisdictions. In February 2007, Canada's National Round Table on the Environment and Economy found that social and environmental disclosures by Canadian companies were consistently deficient and under-reported, and called for enhanced disclosure.

So whose responsibility is it to tackle the issue of enhanced disclosure? The Ontario Securities Commission is charged with fostering fair and efficient capital markets and confidence in their integrity. David Wilson, chair and CEO of the Ontario Securities Commission, stated during his testimony before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies:

"Fundamentally, we believe that knowledge gained through the disclosure of information is the best protection for investors. The bedrock of our regulatory system is full, fair and timely disclosure of all information that could be expected to influence investment decisions....

"The logic is pretty simple: Knowledge protects investors. That protection fosters confidence in market integrity. Confidence makes for an efficient market. An efficient market fuels the economy, and a stronger economy is good for citizens and businesses."

However, a recent OSC review concluded that the disclosure of many Ontario companies was insufficient, particularly with respect to environmental issues. It is clear that steps to enhance disclosure must be taken in Ontario, just as they are being taken around the world. Various forms of enhanced disclosure regarding environmental, social and governance factors have been man-

dated in the UK, France, Denmark, Australia and South Africa, among others.

CSR principles have also been enunciated by the United Nations, the OEDC, the International Labour Organization and the European Parliament. There has been recent activity in the United States, with petitions filed before the US Securities and Exchange Commission calling for uniform disclosure and evaluation as it relates to climate change. And in May 2008, California passed a Senate bill which requires the development of an investor-based climate-change disclosure standard.

The actions being taken around the world are consistent with public opinion and the views of corporate leaders. According to a survey released in March 2009, 90% of Canadian senior executives consider reporting on the environmental and social impacts of their companies to be important, yet 78% believe that the average investor does not have enough information about sustainability performance. Seventy-one per cent of CEOs said that regulators should mandate companies to release information that could significantly impact earnings, in contrast to only 14% who opposed non-financial disclosure. Seventy-four per cent of CFOs accepted that legislation relating to disclosure and reporting of sustainability performance would become more stringent over the next five years.

Can ESG disclosure really help provide the information that can better protect Ontario investors? The accuracy of ESG analysis undertaken by Innovest analysts, who accurately forecasted the subprime mortgage collapse in October 2006, nearly eight months before the crisis, and who downgraded Bear Stearns some nine months before it collapsed, clearly tells us that the answer is a resounding yes.

Indices and research on sustainability and financial performance unequivocally conclude that companies with superior performance and positioning on sustainability achieved an on-average superior financial return. That only makes sense, because companies which think about and plan for the next 100 years have a much better chance of being around for the next 100 years.

The time to act is now. On March 10, 2009, the Amsterdam Declaration on Transparency and Reporting called on governments to introduce policies requiring companies to report on ESG factors or publicly explain why they have not done so.

Canada has fared better than many other nations because of a strong banking sector, and nobody will disagree that in large measure that is because of a strong, made-in-Canada, made-in-Ontario banking regulation system.

Perhaps the biggest lesson to be learned from our ability to withstand global forces and emerge stronger from the current economic downturn is the role a made-in-Ontario disclosure framework must play as we rebuild a strong economic foundation and a sustainable future for this generation and generations to come.

The capital markets are an essential part of the engine for economic growth in Ontario, and enhanced disclosure

reform will benefit investors, business and the province as a whole. Now is the time to lead here in Ontario and build that sustainable future.

To support my proposition, I turned to a recent quote from George Soros in his book *The New Paradigm for Financial Markets*: "There are systemic risks that need to be managed by the regulatory authorities. To be able to do so, they must have adequate information. The participants must provide that information even if it is costly and cumbersome. The costs pale into insignificance when compared to the costs of a breakdown."

I look forward to hearing the debate on this resolution today. I would ask for the support of my colleagues all around the House. All of us sent here by our constituents have the responsibility to raise their voices in this chamber. The voices of our constituents are telling us loud and clear that in this time of economic crisis, it is time to be bold, it is time to take action and it is time to look beyond the horizon and find ways to ensure that Ontario will come out of this current global economic crisis in a way that is stronger, better and more sustainable for generations of Ontarians to come.

1340

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Let me say at the outset that giving investors more information, as opposed to less information, is obviously a good thing. It allows them to make good decisions; it allows them to make better decisions. I'm not sure if you can ever give investors enough information to help all of them make good decisions.

As the member pointed out, it was over a year ago, prior to the October collapse of the marketplace, that people were talking about the subprime mortgage meltdown, and yet very few people, in my experience, and certainly not the professional managers of pension funds, withdrew their money or put their money, or a significant portion of their money, into money markets where it would have been protected. The consequences of the size of that meltdown in the housing market couldn't go unnoticed, and yet, even with all the information that was available, precious few people saved themselves from financial discomfort, or financial ruin in some cases. So I'm not sure how much information companies should be required to give. I think more information is always good, but it's how it's done and how it's listened to.

This motion seeks enhanced Ontario Securities Commission accountability, which is interesting. Increased accountability from government and its agencies is a good thing. But this Liberal government should perhaps practise what it preaches. Yesterday, the Progressive Conservative opposition put forward a motion seeking similar accountability. Bob Runciman, our leader, moved that, "whereas the budget introduced on March 26, 2009, would give the McGuinty government the authority to spend an extraordinary and unprecedented amount of taxpayer money," and it went on to talk about the 2005 Auditor General's report, which was highly critical of the

McGuinty government's lack of accountability and the transfers of taxpayers' money, particularly at the end of the year. The Auditor General was talking about slush-gate, the \$31 million that went out the door very quickly at the end of the year. A million dollars of that money went to the Toronto Cricket Club. The Auditor General continued to find the government wanting in accountability—there were four different categories that our motion went through, which I won't bother to list here. It suggested at the end that "each such report shall automatically and immediately be posted on an accessible and interactive government website, and be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates and to the Auditor General." That motion, which was introduced yesterday, was defeated by the Liberal government.

This government, I suggest, can't have it both ways. You can't demand disclosure from an agency or the companies that are responsible to that agency while refusing to disclose your own spending records. I believe it's hypocritical. Is "hypocritical" a parliamentary term, Mr. Speaker? At times it has been; at times it hasn't been. It does border on that. Let me say that it borders on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I think it would be a lot more helpful if you'd go right back to the resolution.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm working on the resolution. This initiative might be more appropriately tabled when the markets aren't in such a tailspin, because this motion is going to put added pressure on individual companies that are listed by the Ontario Securities Commission. The additional information that would be required by this motion, if it is passed, would put the companies at a fiscal disadvantage. It would be very expensive for some of them to put this information in their annual reports, and the effect that that information might have on investments would be questionable in the vast majority of cases.

I would suggest to the member that the Ontario Securities Commission's responsibility is to ensure that there is no illegal activity going on on the Toronto Stock Exchange, activity such as we saw in the Bernie Madoff case, the Ponzi scheme in the United States which sucked literally billions of dollars out of the market, or the comparable case in Canada when Mr. Tang, I believe it was, and his Ponzi scheme sucked hundreds of millions of dollars out of the Canadian market. I think that's the business of the Ontario Securities Commission and that's the business that they should be concentrating on. In fact, I would support a motion that they should be given further resources and they should do a better job in tracking those types of things down.

It was always disappointing to me that Mr. Black of the newspaper business was found guilty in some of those areas when in fact he was found guilty in the United States, and the Ontario Securities Commission—he was found guilty, so those crimes took place in Ontario, or some of them did, yet it was in the United States that he was found guilty. The Ontario Securities Commission never took him to court, and I think that was a

shame. The Ontario Securities Commission should have done a better job in that area.

I would suggest that at this point in time, the bottom lines of most companies in Ontario are severely threatened with profitability and that added responsibilities on their bottom line may not be the way to go at this particular time. Again, I refer back to my opening remarks, that more information in the hands of investors is always a good thing. It's how you do it and under what conditions.

The Ontario Securities Commission, of course, looks out for investors, taxpaying citizens who need to feel safe and protected against fraud and corruption. This legislation, I would suggest, has very little to do with fraud and corruption; it has to do with the social nature of their businesses, and I don't think that would help people make informed, profitable decisions when buying or selling stock.

I would also point out that perhaps another area that the Ontario Securities Commission should be investigating more and doing a better job of is moving towards a national agency. We're one of the few countries in the world that doesn't have a national agency, where a company operating across Canada doesn't have to register 11 times, I think, fill out 11 different sets of forms and register in every province they want to do business in, as well as at the national level. We should be working hard in order to reduce that amount of red tape for companies, as opposed to creating more red tape for companies to operate in the various jurisdictions in Canada, there being 11 at the current time.

With that, I would leave my remarks and wish the member opposite well in her presentation of her private member's motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I recognize the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today, and I want to say right off that the NDP will be supporting this resolution. I want to thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for doing the work that needed to be done to pull all of this together, to talk with the different stakeholders and to bring this resolution before the House itself.

As the member is probably well aware, the NDP in the past has called for significant action to strengthen securities legislation, to change the way the Ontario Securities Commission operates, because, like her, we have felt that there are many things that have been left untouched, areas in which the public, both the investing public but also the public that is at the receiving end of economic activity, needs greater protection. We think this resolution by the House is consistent with the positions we've put forward before.

1350

I'm sure the member knows there have been several high-profile inquiries into securities in Ontario and substantial recommendations for changing the way that securities are regulated. Those reports and recommendations have gone on to the great holding pattern in the

sky, where they continue to accumulate dust as the days go by. My hope is that at some point a resolution, perhaps this one, will be the straw that breaks the camel's back—I know I'm mixing metaphors mercilessly—and allow some forward motion on this. There's no doubt in my mind that this kind of resolution is required.

When you look at very recent history, there's no doubt in anyone's mind that the lack of corporate transparency and accountability—the irresponsibility—was at the heart of the financial crisis that North America, and indeed the world, is dealing with right now. Forty years ago, Milton Friedman said that the goal of corporations was very simple: to accumulate the highest possible profits and generate the greatest possible shareholder value. His position was summarized somewhat more succinctly in the movie *Wall Street*. A character, Gordon Gekko, had a great line: "Greed is good." Some days, a film scriptwriter can summarize many large volumes of ideology in one line, and in this case they did.

The simple reality is that there is extraordinary pressure every day on CEOs and senior managers to follow the Milton Friedman/Gordon Gekko line. Read the *Report on Business*, read the *Toronto Star* report on business, read the *National Post*: Every time quarterly results are published, there's a response on the part of investors in the stock market; there's incredible pressure to maximize at every turn the value that can be extracted from an operation. That means that long-term thinking gets pushed to the side; that means that thinking about the social impacts of a particular investment gets pushed to the side; that means that environmental concerns are pushed to the side—not in all corporations; some people seem to be able to balance it better than others, but the tendency and the pressure is strong, profound and relentless.

If you're going to counterbalance that, it is not simply a question of making charitable statements or making noises that give people assurance; you actually need regulations in place so that people understand the scale of risk they take when they invest in a company, and so that those companies act in a way that is far more socially beneficial to us, to our communities and to our province than simply accumulating profits would be. I know that those who subscribe to the "greed is good" school say that it delivers jobs and gives value, and that eventually, greed trickles down on the great masses below.

If we look at the impact of bank executives, trading house executives and others, who quite literally bet the farm—not a farm they own but the farm that had been invested in them by millions of investors and depositors—we look at a financial crisis that has devastated millions in the United States, caused a slowdown in our economy here and caused the loss of the private banking sector in places like Iceland. It was interesting listening to the BBC News a few weeks ago, where a commentator said, "Well, I previously said that UK banks were a hop, skip and a jump away from being completely nationalized. I now say it's just a hop." There is no question that the banking sector took a bath in jurisdictions where

regulation was skimpier, and investors took that bath along with them. They didn't want to do that. It was something that was forced upon them.

Some say that that crisis is greed gone wrong. All I can say is that the crisis is the inevitable result of a situation within which people are forced to maximize results, no matter what—no matter what. When you're in a situation like that, then you game; you play at the edges. You take huge speculative risks because, frankly, it's the only way you're going to beat the average. The bubble bursts, housing prices collapse, people lose their jobs, there's insolvency.

Companies do need to focus on a more sustainable approach, both to their own operations and their operations within the larger society. Some studies have shown that companies that have done that consistently have been able to perform well—not in the stratosphere but perform well. What we need to do in this province, and following on the resolution that's before us today, is make that approach far more part of our lives and the lives of those corporations.

Having had the opportunity to talk to a friend of mine who retired from banking about a year ago, I asked him why it is that in the United States you had all these banks go under and in Canada they were relatively stable. He said, "Well, having worked on both sides of the border, I can say there's absolutely no difference in terms of the intellectual capacity of bankers north or south of that border. The bankers in Canada were saved by the regulatory framework." Again, bringing in a regulatory framework that protects companies from exposing themselves to liabilities in the social sphere or the environmental sphere is not just good for society but good for business.

We look at the reality of climate change. The report by Sir Nicholas Stern for the government of the UK talked about the cost if we didn't act on climate change and the cost to act on climate change. The cost to act now was about 1% or 2% of GDP. The price of not acting is more like 15% to 20% of GDP, an impact on the global economy comparable to the Great Depression, World War II, events of that magnitude.

If in fact shareholders are putting money into companies that are creating greater and greater liability for themselves by being irresponsible in the field of climate change or irresponsible when it comes to toxic chemicals—there are companies that have had to go under, take bankruptcy protection because their liabilities for products like asbestos were so huge that the only way to keep even a small part of their operation going was to shield themselves through bankruptcy protection.

In bringing forward regulation that says investors should know when companies are gaming—frankly, when I say "gaming," I mean investing in toxic chemicals or utilizing toxic chemicals in a way that will present the company with a large-scale, ongoing, unaffordable liability in the future. The investors ought to know that, and companies ought to know that they're going to have to say what's going on there, so that the investment com-

munity—and the investment community, let's think about it. Sure there are lots of people who are millionaires, but there are a lot of people who parked their life savings in their RRSPs or mutual funds, hoping that the companies they put money into will be managed in a prudent, thoughtful and productive way. They don't think they're gambling when they put their money in an RRSP. If companies are not required to disclose their irresponsible actions, their liability-creating actions, then in fact small investors are being forced to gamble, and they shouldn't be.

In this society, private investment is arguably the most powerful decision-maker when it comes to structuring our economy. Governments have a role, but compared to the private sector it's relatively limited. The private sector decides where factories will be built. They decide where offices will be located. They decide the grand outline of the economy that we have. We set laws in this chamber and we set laws in other chambers, but companies have tremendous power. Bringing in and putting in place legislation that requires companies to be more responsible is in fact going to the place where most of the power is exercised and saying that if you in fact are going to operate in this community and if you are going to represent yourself as a safe haven for investment, you have to operate within this framework of rules, and that is a responsible thing for us to do.

1400

When you look at other jurisdictions who look at banks in Canada now and say, "Those banks aren't failing and aren't being propped up with hundreds of billions of dollars in loans," then our banking system can represent itself as relatively stable because we had a good regulatory framework—again, not because bankers on one side of the border are smarter or not. It's because we have had a fairly cautious approach—by luck or wisdom, I don't know, but we have had it and it was good for us.

My hope is that this resolution will spur the government to take action and put in place changes to securities regulation and to the operations of the Ontario Securities Commission so that in future, the engine of our economy, which in this case is the private sector, will operate in a framework that promotes social good as much as it promotes private profit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Thank you, and the member should know that the standing orders are in fact silent on the mixing of metaphors.

The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I will try not to mix any metaphors, Speaker.

It's a pleasure to join the debate today. It's interesting when we have private members' business: Sometimes you get interesting bills coming forward and sometimes you get bills that, personally, I don't find all that interesting, but every so often a bill comes along that is incredibly timely, and that would be the way I would describe this initiative that we're being asked to debate this afternoon.

I really want to express my admiration to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for the amount of work she's

put into the preparation of the initiative we have before us, because it really gets to the heart of the matter as to why there are so many people, certainly in Canada, and I think in North America and around the world, who are scratching their heads these days and wondering just what exactly happened in the past 18 months. How did we end up in the state we're in, with the economy in the shape it's in, and how did so many lives get impacted in this way?

I think it gets back to the fact that in the past we had confidence that somehow, somebody in the regulatory system was looking after the best interests. Then we started to hear of companies named Enron, WorldCom, Parmalat, Lucent Technologies and AIG. Who ever thought that an organization by the name of Fannie Mae would have such an impact on our own lives? The world began to change and people started to ask questions as to who was looking after all this. "Who is looking after my best interests?"

If you go back to a speech that was made in 1998 by Arthur Levitt, the former chair of the SEC, he gave a speech that I think some people in the business paid a lot of attention to. It was called *The Numbers Game*, and it started to openly discuss what earnings management was doing to the securities system, how earnings management perhaps was presenting companies in a light that was not entirely accurate.

Financial statements can be a map or a maze. They can be a map that gets you right to the information you need, or they can be a maze where they put obstacles in your way so you can't find the information you really want as a private investor. Sometimes those hurdles are introduced purposely, in my opinion. That's where you need a regulator that has the ability to step in and say, "No, that has to be changed. If we're taking this out to the public, that's not accurate. You need to do some more work on that." That's where we start to rely on the auditors. That's where we start to rely on the opinion that auditors bring to financial statements.

It's interesting, though. We start school, all of us, when we're at about the age of five, and most of us are still in school in our early 20s. There aren't very many of us, I don't think, even in this House, who could probably analyze financial statements. That's what we go to financial advisers for. That's why we have bankers and financial advisers. They are the people who are supposed to guide us through this maze. It seems to me that we could do a better job in our educational system of ensuring that people, as part of the education that they receive to enter our society, are able to determine what a balance sheet is and what an income and earnings statement is, and what's the difference between a statement of shareholders' equity.

But people rely on the decisions that are made on a daily basis to plan for the future and they want to know that that information is accurate. The financial statements obviously will give you the quantitative state of a company, and the MDA, the management, discussion and analysis portion, gives you the qualitative, gives you the opinions.

We need to know that the regulator we have—and certainly I'm a strong supporter of a single regulator for this entire country; I think our party is on record of supporting that as well, and I hope the rest of Confederation comes around to that way of thinking in the near future. But when you look at some of the information that's presented to the average shareholder in the annual reports, you often get a lot of glossy photos of the latest gizmo or the latest product they're selling. You get a lot of fluff. You rarely see the financial ratios. It's not compulsory, for example, to put down your liquidity ratios or your profitability ratios or your market ratios—information that would be of great interest to somebody who was considering investing.

I think that the powers that are being asked for today by the member are something that deserves the support of this entire House.

My time is up, Speaker; thank you for allowing me to join the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion. Let me start by congratulating the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her hard work in putting together this motion. I know that she has done a lot of information-gathering in terms of the breadth and scope of this motion, and I'm very pleased to speak to it.

Let me start with thanking Mr. P.K. Pal, with whom I had the opportunity to practise law before being elected to this chamber and who is an expert on corporate governance, corporate responsibility, and environmental, social and governance reporting. The little bit I know is thanks to him. Under his tutelage I gathered a fair bit of knowledge about this very important topic.

We live in a day and age where there is a right to know on behalf of consumers, investors, shareholders and stakeholders. Information is essentially gold in today's era, and it's not sufficient that we receive from our corporations, our corporate partners, information relating only to financial or accounting information. We need to move further ahead and be able to receive information that relates to environmental issues, social issues and governance issues because of the impact that a lot of these businesses have on our lives on a daily basis.

In fact, I think that business is starting to realize that there is a premium on sharing this information, because consumers, investors, stakeholders and shareholders are becoming more and more aware; they want to know more about the nature and the degree of the business. That movement is very much, I believe, taking place globally. In Canada, we might be playing some catch-up, and this motion will play a significant role for Canada or Ontario to make up that ground.

I want to, for example, mention some standards that already exist, and I'm referring to a report entitled, *Carrots and Sticks for Starters: Current Trends and Approaches in Voluntary and Mandatory Standards for Sustainability Reporting*. If you look at the voluntary

standards that exist, there are some really good standards or organizations that have put standards out there—for example, the Global Reporting Initiative, which has produced guidelines “for voluntary use by organizations for reporting on the economic, environmental and social dimensions of their activities, products and services based on reporting principles,” and AA1000 guidelines as to “how to establish a systematic stakeholder engagement process that generates the indicators, targets and reporting systems needed to ensure its effectiveness in impacting on decisions, activities and overall organization performance.”

The International Standards Organization, ISO, is working on developing guidance standards for social responsibility. The European Union is another great example; it has put directives in place and I think is probably the most advanced jurisdiction when it comes to CSR and ESG reporting, where there are minimum mandatory standards for EU countries in terms of corporate social responsibility and environmental standards.

So I think it's necessary that we take that step as well and create a framework for enhanced reporting. I really do want to stress that disclosures that are understandable, comparable and outcome-focused, as referenced in this motion, are paramount to ensure that transparency is maintained and information is shared.

1410

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased as well to join in the debate, the discussion, today, and as well want to congratulate my seatmate from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for bringing this matter before the Legislature.

I'm hoping in part that the support that's being expressed around here can be extended even more broadly and that the member from Halton might consider—I know in his comments, if I can paraphrase, some of his concerns were in regard to timing. This may or may not be the best time for one to be entertaining this type of review and/or implementation. If you have a look at the timing, what the member is suggesting is that a report be submitted to the Minister of Finance, I believe it's January 1, 2010, obviously the end of this year, with recommendations regarding next steps. So it's not an immediacy of implementation, as much as one would like to see that; there is a process involved, and I'm sure that any recommendations would be sensitive to the economic climate that we find ourselves in.

I almost wanted to start my comments by adding in a disclaimer. When I look online at what's being offered up for sale or if I get something in the mail, there's often a disclaimer: “Past performance will not be an indicator of future results,” and there's a whole bunch of gobbledegook that goes with that which I don't understand, frankly, in spite of, at times, my role within the Ministry of Finance, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. My role, like many in this place, is to sift through information on a policy level but draw upon the expertise of those with that level of expertise in this

place, within the bureaucratic framework in which we work, as well as stakeholders.

I think what the member is clearly asking for in this resolution is for those with expertise in the area to outreach, to engage with the key stakeholders in the area of investment, to look at key issues around the ESGs in particular, as well as the corporate social responsibility part of that, to look at what the implications are on a go-forward basis, and to be considerate of our current economic climate as a driver for this when people are asking for the opportunity to be better informed in regard to their investment initiatives.

As others have said, few of us are immune now from investments in areas that are less traditional than our parents or grandparents might have seen. You know, we hear about ethical funds on a regular basis. What does that really mean to us? What level of reporting is there around what an ethical fund is all about? What about fair trade practices and issues around labour practices or child labour practices? There are any number of issues we need to consider.

I think the member has brought forward a resolution that has appropriate legs within the structures we have and that would provide value to the minister. I hope the members of the Legislature will be able to support this resolution today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues from all sides of the House—the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, the member for Oakville, the member for Ottawa Centre, the member for Danforth and the member for Halton—for their comments.

I think we have an opportunity in this House to make Ontario a jurisdiction that provides greater protection for investors, that moves us beyond short-term thinking to true sustainable analysis and puts Ontario in a position to match best practices that have been developed around the world by a variety of thoughtful individuals.

I want to close by saying that I believe this is the exact right time to undertake this analysis. Mervyn King, who's the chair of the board of directors at the Global Reporting Initiative, at the launch of their Amsterdam Declaration in March, stated the following: “As we seek to rebuild our economic system following the financial crisis, transparency on economic, social and governance issues from our companies must be paramount. Regulators, financial markets, companies and civil society will need comprehensive information on which to assess strategic risks and opportunities.”

Some other great authors, Don Tapscott and David Ticoll, in *The Naked Corporation* say the following: “Free markets depend on strong governments. Public interests are greater than the sum of all private interests. And open market economies depend on clear rules, rigorously enforced.”

I think that the strength of our banking sector in the current time of economic crisis proves the point well. We

have made-in-Ontario, made-in-Canada solutions that have worked well to protect us from the storms around the world. Let's take an opportunity now to move Ontario to a position where we will grow, where we will be a jurisdiction that progressive dollars will want to invest in that will be able to develop that sustainable economy that we all want for our children and generations to come. The time is now.

CAREGIVER AND FOREIGN WORKER
RECRUITMENT AND PROTECTION
ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RECRUTEMENT
ET LA PROTECTION
DES FOURNISSEURS DE SOINS
ET DES TRAVAILLEURS ÉTRANGERS

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act respecting the recruitment and protection of caregivers and foreign workers / *Projet de loi 160, Loi ayant trait au recrutement et à la protection des fournisseurs de soins et des travailleurs étrangers.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence has 12 minutes.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm here today to make my fellow colleagues aware of a very important situation that exists in our province and really throughout this country. It's in regard to the plight of the caregivers who live in our communities across our province. My bill tries to address a series of systemic abuses that occur in the treatment of these wonderful people who are caregivers for our elderly and for our children and families.

The basis of the bill deals with trying to correct a problem that exists with a program that was instituted over 17 years ago by the federal government. It's called the live-in caregiver program. It was designed to fill a shortage of nannies that existed in our communities. It allows Canadians to import foreign caregivers through employment agencies, which in Ontario are neither regulated or licensed. In other words, if you want to have a live-in caregiver for your grandmother or an elderly relative who's sick or for a child or your children, there's a program, and it's a good program. The trouble is, there are many challenges in this program being effective.

The proposal that I have is really based on what just went into effect in Manitoba on April 1. What the Manitoba legislation does is it licenses and regulates anybody who's involved in the recruitment of foreign workers and ensures that they are bona fide companies or agents, they're registered and licensed, they are to abide by a code of conduct, and they can be fined if they don't abide by the code of conduct, or their licences can be suspended or revoked if they don't abide by the rules. I'm asking that our government undertake the same initiative, and I've brought forward my private member's bill in an attempt to try and get these protections brought into Ontario.

Subsequent to my introduction of the bill, there has been an indication from the Minister of Labour that he's looking at introducing substantive legislation. So I hope that the bill has good fortune and it does become law that the minister will introduce. Meanwhile, we have this bill before us, which I think is a good template. It's not a perfect bill but is one that has been passed in Manitoba and instituted to protect foreign workers in Manitoba.

The essence of this bill is really the result of an incredible series of articles that were introduced in the Toronto Star by two veteran reporters, Robert Cribb and Dale Brazao from the Toronto Star, who did some investigative reporting to find some abuses that were quite astonishing.

1420

There was one case of a young nanny-caregiver who said in public, "My employer cared more about the family dog than she did about me." The poor caregiver was bitten three times. She wasn't allowed to go for medical treatment. In fact, she was asked to sign a waiver saying that the family was not responsible for the dog attacking her three times.

There was another case—and this is not only happening in Ontario. In Vancouver, there was this young nanny, Marissa. She was working seven days a week, no days off—from 7 in the morning till 11 o'clock at night, seven days a week. She asked to have one hour off to go to church. That was refused.

There was another caregiver who had the courage to come forward and say that she was being housed in a basement with dozens of other caregivers, their passports and bank books taken away from them. In essence, it was like a form of indentured servitude right here in Toronto.

There were numerous examples in this Star series about the conditions these caregivers are in. Much of this abuse that this bill tries to deal with is perpetrated by the recruiters. These recruiters find it very lucrative to bring in these hard-working women, for the most part. They come from Hong Kong or the Philippines. They come here to Canada basically to earn a few dollars so they can send money back to their mothers and fathers in the Philippines or feed their children back home. Yet what the recruiters do is they charge them these under-the-table fees. It's not bad enough that they're sometimes underpaid, but then they charge them \$3,000, \$4,000, \$5,000, up to \$10,000 in kickbacks and tell them, "If you object to this fee and you don't pay me back the fee"—in fact, sometimes they charge them a fee plus 20% interest—"we'll make sure that you are going to be fired. You're going to lose your job and you'll be sent back to the Philippines." That's the line they give them.

There is one sad case in Toronto right now as we speak, of a nanny who is in a coma. Obviously, she's unable to work. The employer wants to fire her. The tragedy there—I mean, it's so obvious—is she would be deported if she comes out of the coma because she wasn't able to do her duty. The employer wouldn't give her a T4 slip, so she wouldn't be paying her taxes, therefore she wouldn't fulfill the federal contract as it's stipu-

lated. She's in a coma and can't work, so the fear her friends have—and thankfully they think she will come out of the coma—is that she'll be deported and not fulfill her contract because she's in a coma.

This is how ludicrous the situation is right here in Ontario. It also happens right across this country. The live-in caregiver program provides incredibly good service to people, yet in 17 years there have been no protections made for the caregivers in the program. The recruiters and the agents used to be licensed in 2001 in Ontario. In 2001, the licensing of these foreign recruitment agencies was taken away, so it's a free-for-all. Anybody—a butcher, a plumber, anybody—can be a recruiter. There are no checks. In fact, the Canada Border Services Agency thinks that 90% who come are exploited by these recruiters. Many of them have no jobs they're supposed to be lined up with when they get here.

“Documents obtained by the Star show Canada Border Services Agency officials believe there is ‘ongoing fraud and misrepresentation’ within the program, but the immigration and human resources departments are not taking action.”

This is a whole industry: “The Star has interviewed two dozen caregivers who came to Canada over the past five years. Almost all arrived to find their employers did not exist or had hired someone else.” You're supposed to link the caregiver with the employer. These hard-working caregivers come and find out they've been taken under fraudulent circumstances.

Anyone can open what the Star calls “a nanny importing business.” They treat people like chattels. The Internet and local newspapers are filled with ads from dozens of Ontario agencies claiming to have nannies on hand, as if they're some kind of chattel. Thousands of them come to Canada just looking to work. One border service agent working with the federal government said, “This is clearly human trafficking.” That's what is going on. There are no checks and balances federally, and it was deregulated in Ontario in 2001.

The Canada Border Services Agency said, “The caregivers are innocent and are left obligated to pay the agency fees but are left without employment.” The Canada Border Services Agency has listed 20 companies they know as being fraudulent; 20 companies are listed. They know, but they don't broadcast them. Instead of going after the agents and the agencies that are fraudulent, do you know what they do? They go after the nannies. They threaten to deport the caregivers, and yet none of these agencies have been shut down. The only shutdown I've been able to see in the Star series was when the government of the Philippines jailed someone from Toronto who was involved in this exploitation. The government of the Philippines did it; the government of Canada did nothing; the government of Ontario has no regulation of these agencies that are just exploiting vulnerable people.

This is a proposal that I think needs some serious evaluation. These caregivers, who are in homes in all our ridings, are just trying to fulfill a simple contract. They

want to work hard; they want to take care of children and the elderly. But in their attempt to do that, they're getting very little protection and a lot of exploitation by these operators. This type of legislation would at least license, register and create awareness. There would be an online registry, hopefully, that could be seen by a potential caregiver in Hong Kong or in Dubai or in Manila. They could see whether that company is licensed in Ontario.

In fact, even employers—prospective people who want a nanny—have been calling my office and saying, “How do I know which company is legitimate? I don't know. Can someone tell me? What are the 20 bad ones that have been listed by the Canada Border Services Agency? We have no way of knowing.” This legislation would at least give people the right to know who the fraudulent ones are and get them out of business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I want the member to know that I will be supporting this legislation. It reminds me of days gone by, back in the 1960s, when there were foreign agricultural workers coming into Ontario in a very unregulated fashion. I would hasten to say that the vast majority of them were treated well and treated fairly, but there were always those who would take advantage of a situation. I think that perhaps we're dealing with the same situation here, in that many of these nannies are well treated and have become virtual members of the family they're working with; however, as is so often the case, the few will ruin the system for the many. That's what happened with the foreign agricultural workers. That legislation started in Ottawa. You need enabling legislation in Ottawa to make this system work. The enabling legislation in Ottawa was passed, I believe it was in the early to mid-1960s, and allowed the provinces to set up a system whereby foreign agricultural workers came into the country. They would work in various parts of the agricultural industry, mostly horticulture—fruits and vegetables—in those crops that are very, very labour intensive.

1430

Over the years, there were always people who would run up very close to the rules. Of course, those are the people who make it difficult for everyone else. Those are the people who force more and more rules and regulations to take place, to the point where now the hours of work are regulated, the pay is regulated, the number of workers is regulated, depending on the economy in Canada and in Ontario, whether you can get Ontarians to do the work—if there are any Ontarians who want to do the work that these foreign agricultural workers are doing today—ensuring that you are protecting Ontario jobs for Ontarians, but also making sure that businesses in Ontario can hire foreign agricultural workers to make sure that their crops are harvested, to make sure that their crops are planted and maintained throughout the growing season.

We find that this system, which has been operating now for over 40 years, is operating extremely well. It

doesn't interfere with Ontario's labour markets, by design, and it provides employers with workers who look forward to this kind of opportunity.

In the early days, it was often commented that foreign workers, particularly from Mexico and Jamaica, would come to this country and earn in three months what it took them five years to earn in their country of origin. When they went back, they and their families would live very, very well for the nine months that they weren't here. They would come back the following year for another three-month or four-month stint. Those things all worked very well.

It also developed that many of them understood what our system was here in Ontario, and they would make application for immigration to Ontario, obtaining a permanent job here, making application for immigration, and become Ontario citizens through it. We've got some extremely beneficial citizens in Ontario that have developed through that agricultural workers program. I can see nothing but success out of that program.

In fact, one chap who worked on the Chudleigh farm—his name was George Bailey—got a job at Rockwell International, which was a plant in Milton, and worked there for a number of years. He married, had children, was a Canadian citizen and raised a family. Of course, one of his children was Donovan Bailey—a rather fast Canadian, world record holder in the 100-yard sprint. He brought Canada great prestige around the world, and his father immigrated to Ontario under those conditions.

I would support this legislation. I congratulate the member for bringing it forward. I think in Ontario that everyone deserves a great deal of respect, more so than in other places that we hear stories of from around the world. I've been fortunate in life that I've seen some of those places around the world, personally. I can tell you that some of the conditions that people live in are pretty bad. It has been said that 60%, 70%, or maybe 80% of the world gets up in the morning and hopes that they'll have enough food to eat for that day. We're lucky in this country in that when we get up in the morning we hope we can stay on our diet for just one more day.

So I congratulate the member for bringing this to the House, and I look forward to supporting this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to stand and support the bill by my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence. I know that he will more fully recognize some of the guests in the members' gallery, but I'd just like to greet them and say, "Magundang hapon-po sa inyong lahat."

Just before I talk about the bill, I'd like to point out how effective this particular member has been in the past in some of the resolutions that he has introduced. The many, many things about which the member for Eglinton—Lawrence can say, "This has been adopted into law" because of what he has done include red-light camera legislation; the regulation of traditional Chinese medicine; the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, which

he drove personally; the end of mandatory retirement, which he stood up for first; and portable external heart defibrillators in public places. So, when this member stands up and says, "There's a wrong that I aim to right with a piece of legislation," the chances are excellent that that wrong is, indeed, going to be righted and turned into law.

This bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, would, if passed, have some of these key components—this is the difference it's going to make. It's going to:

- license and register foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies. We've just passed into law a bill, Bill 139, that does pretty much that for temp agencies. We already have a template that shows that this can be done and in a fair, equitable and responsible manner;

- prohibit recruiters from collecting fees from foreign workers. We've just done that with Bill 139 for temp agencies;

- protect the wages and benefits of foreign workers—again, not much different from what we've just passed this week;

- establish a public online registry of licensed recruiters—nothing wrong with more openness, just a splendid idea; and, to make sure there's teeth in the act,

- impose penalties of up to \$50,000 for corporations and \$25,000 for individuals who are in contravention of this act.

This is a bill that has been properly thought out. This is the kind of bill we need to do this job to make a difference.

We used to have some regulation of foreign workers, but they were deregulated some eight years ago. Currently, the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia prohibit charging foreign workers any placement fee—one of the single biggest abuses that this bill hopes to clean up—and they require all agencies to be licensed.

This bill was introduced for first reading just a short time ago: at the end of March. This is its second reading, and of course, from the Filipino community, which is so vibrant and has been such a tremendous community to get to know in the GTA—it has received some tremendous support from the Filipino community. It's certainly supported by Philippine Consul General Alejandro Mosquera.

Some of the issues here were brought out most notably recently in the Toronto Star investigation. Without going into a lot of the detail on it, it pointed out some of the awful conditions in which caregivers, who assume they're coming over to Canada for a better life, find that just about everything that has been told to them is bogus, and I know some of the other speakers on this bill are going to dwell on that.

With that said as the introduction, I'm going to leave some of the description of the meat of this bill to some of the other speakers. Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

M^{me} France G  linas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations. This is the first time I've seen you in the chair.

The NDP is pleased to support some of the provisions of this bill: certainly the licensing and registration of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies; the part that prohibits recruiters from collecting fees from foreign workers; the part that protects the wages and benefits of foreign workers; the establishment of a public online registry of licensed recruiters; and the imposition of penalties for corporations, and penalties for individuals who contravene the bill.

1440

There is much that the NDP can support in this private member's bill, but we would certainly prefer to see a more comprehensive approach, similar to what is being done in Manitoba under the Worker Recruitment and Protection Act. In Manitoba, the act aims to regulate the recruitment of all foreign workers, and to protect workers more generally, by requiring licensing of all employment agencies, individuals involved in recruiting foreign workers and anyone involved in recruiting children under 17 for employment purposes. Under this act, these employers will be required to register with the province when they want to bring workers to Manitoba and use only recruiters licensed by the province. The new rules also prohibit charging workers any fees; they would be paid by the prospective employer.

More specifically, as of April 1 of this year, all Manitoba employers wanting to recruit foreign workers are required to register with the employment standards branch. Employers are also required to provide information about their companies and the types of positions for which they are recruiting. They also need to provide information about third party agencies and individuals that would be involved in the recruitment process.

Under what they have in Manitoba, foreign worker recruitment consists of anyone who assists a foreign worker in seeking or finding a job in Manitoba, or assists an employer in seeking or finding a foreign worker for a job in Manitoba. It does not matter whether a fee is charged or not.

Neither a recruiter nor an employer can ever charge or collect a fee, directly or indirectly, from the worker. The employment standards branch will conduct inspections and investigations to ensure that fees are not connected to seeking or finding work.

The Employment Standards Act requires fundamental reform. The issues related to foreign recruited workers cannot be fit in one nifty package. The issues addressed in this bill represent only some of the issues facing temporary agency workers, and peripheral workers more generally.

To really get at the fundamental challenges facing what we call peripheral workers in today's labour market, there are broader issues that must be addressed in a fundamental rethinking of the Employment Standards Act.

My colleague Cheri DiNovo will be tabling an important private member's bill to deal with some of these issues that are not in this particular bill here today.

First, when we look at the reality of what happens in the labour market, it is impossible to separate out one form of employment, such as foreign recruitment work, from other forms of employment, such as employment disguised as independent contracting.

Regulating foreign recruitment work alone may act as an incentive for employers to shift practices to other, more unregulated forms. In other words, we need to integrate legislation that deals with these workers into a broad update of employment standards and protection of all workers.

Second, protecting foreign recruited workers through improving employment standards is just one side of the coin. Workers need to be able to enforce their employment rights while they are on the job. With no protection in the workplace, many workers are denied minimum standards such as overtime pay.

When violations of minimum standards occur, workers must absorb the lost earnings until they can find a new job, or be fired, when they try to get permanent work. That is why we need legislation that includes improved employment standards enforcement.

Third, the Employment Standards Act has an important role to play in establishing a framework for equality. The government should not enable employers to impose inferior working conditions on workers because of the form of employment or because of their employment status. Equality and non-discrimination for temp agency workers is central to policy reviews of temporary agency work in European countries, in the European Union, and in the International Labour Organization. So too, must Ontario address equality of working conditions for temp agency workers.

In the UK, the government has finally recognized the need for regulating temp agency work and for providing for equal treatment. This is very notable, because the UK has one of the largest temp industries in the European Union. The UK government agreed on a deal on May 20, 2008, between unions and employers that will see agency workers in the UK receive equal treatment. Many other countries in Europe have adopted provisions for equal treatment of temporary agency workers. Our neighbours to the east, Quebec, have a labour code that prohibits employers from paying lower wages for workers doing the same task because the person usually works fewer hours. If you do the same task, you get paid the same amount. There is no principle reason why temporary agency workers should not have the same type of protection here in Ontario.

Equality and non-discrimination for temporary agency workers is conspicuously absent from this private member's bill, and it should be changed. Not only must we begin discussion on the principle for employment policy, but we need to begin making strides like our European counterparts. It is therefore essential that indirect and temporary agency workers should receive the same

working and employment conditions, pay package, statutory and employer-sponsored benefits and conditions that the client companies provide to other workers in all forms of comparable work.

So while the NDP can support many of the provisions that are being put forward in this private member's bill, much more needs to be done to protect all workers in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: First of all, I would like to congratulate the member from Eglinton–Lawrence on introducing this bill. As the member from Mississauga–Streetsville has already indicated, when Mike Colle stands up and he sees a wrong to be righted, for some of us that really means falling in behind him to support him and there's no way to really stop him. So congratulations to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

I'm also delighted to see some people from the Filipino-Canadian community here today. Since someone already spoke some Filipino, I would like to add my congratulations and simply say, "Mabuhay Filipinas." I recognize Mel Catre here, who is the former president of the Filipino-Canadian association, with whom I had the great pleasure, 21 years ago, to go to the Philippines. We were talking about the rights of foreign-trained professionals at that time, because what had happened with many professionals was that they were not receiving equivalency for coursework that they had taken in the Philippines. So we visited about seven universities and found that equivalency was lacking in Canada. Congratulations to him because he took the lead on it, and we were successful in getting more equivalency for their courses in the Philippines.

But today it is clear, as Mr. Colle already indicated, that the federal government has not really done its job. If they had taken the first step to protect these foreign workers and caregivers, there would be no need to introduce this bill in this Legislature. Since they have really failed us, it is incumbent upon the province to introduce this bill to ensure that workers and caregivers are being protected. I think most of us know that these unregulated agencies for jobs will charge foreign caregivers up to \$10,000. What a shame. Caregivers come to Canada with the hope of obtaining landed immigrant status, but sometimes they even find that the jobs that were promised them weren't even there. Despite these jobs being not being available to caregivers, agencies continue to demand payment of their fees, and they even go as far as suing these caregivers for unpaid fees. Imagine that: to pay, sometimes upfront, a down payment of up to \$10,000 to be promised a job in Canada that then does not materialize. That is a real shame, and that's why this bill should be supported, and I hope it will be supported, by every member in this Legislature.

1450

What we want to do here is, we want to make sure that some of these abuses do not happen and workers are being protected. Imagine this: Your employer will say,

"I'm sorry, but the organization that had given you to me wants me to ensure that your passport is given to them because you still owe the fee." Wow; what a way to start a life. There are roughly 20 agencies here in Ontario alone that are involved in this sort of activity, which we might even say is really fraudulent activity.

I know that there are some other speakers. I have a whole speech prepared for another half an hour, but I will have to stop now to give the minister a chance to speak. Thank you very much, and congratulations to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a great pleasure to stand in support of my colleague the member for Eglinton–Lawrence on Bill 160, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act. It's really a testament to the strength of the member for Eglinton–Lawrence's belief in our multicultural community, in social justice and in our diverse Ontario that he has brought this legislation forward.

It's extremely important that we all recognize the importance of this legislation. It's not a coincidence that there are members of the Filipino community here with us. I welcome them and thank them for being here. It was in March, actually, that I had a meeting with Mel Catre in my constituency office. I said to him at that time that I was very concerned about this issue, and, in fact, I informed the Minister of Labour shortly after that meeting. Then, at around the same time, Mr. Colle introduced this legislation into the House, so it's very timely. I'm very pleased that the Minister of Labour has indicated that he is going to be taking action and that he is going to be making changes, but even if it's a symbolic act, it's very important to vote for this private member's legislation today.

I also want to acknowledge the Toronto Star. I think that we have to recognize, as politicians, that it's very important in a democracy that we work together—politicians, journalists and members of the community. That's how a democracy functions. We all support each other in raising issues of social justice and making sure that action is taken—bringing those to the forefront. It takes all of us to do that.

In this case, we're talking about maltreatment of individuals who come to Canada to look after children, to look after seniors, to look after some of our most vulnerable family members. The women—and the majority of the people we're talking about are women—need to have the protection of legislation at the provincial and federal level. I know we've all acknowledged that the federal government needs to come to the table.

I'm pleased to understand that the Progressive Conservative Party had an epiphany on this issue, but in fact, the regulation was removed in 2001. One of the things that I think is a travesty in this province or in any government is that when we move ahead on a social justice issue—that we not pull back, that we continue to move forward and that we not repeal legislation that puts

protections in place. It's important that we push forward and that we do this.

Our grand, diverse province requires that we support each other, that we get to know each other, even though our backgrounds are different. Our national project, this national project of Canada, further demands that we remain alert to the needs of individuals and groups of people, especially those who are new to our country, people who have come to realize their dreams and who, by doing so, enrich and strengthen who we are.

I want to read from the newly released equity and inclusive education strategy just briefly. Michael Adams says our national project "is the effort to live in a country of peace and prosperity, with laws that are just, with people who are humane, and where citizens of all backgrounds encounter equal opportunities when they set out to realize their potential, contribute to their communities, participate in the Canadian economy, and engage in the Canadian political system." That's what this is about. I'm happy to be supporting this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Halton. I know that he did some great work on Yom ha-Shoah, recognizing the Holocaust day. I certainly respect his battle for social justice. I appreciate that support.

To the member from Nickel Belt, I appreciate her comments. I know she is not the critic for this, but this is the Manitoba act. Anyway, I appreciate those comments.

In terms of the other battles in terms of labour equity, there are many battles to fight. If we want to win the war for social justice, we have to win one battle at a time. This is one battle, in protecting vulnerable caregivers, we have to all be united in fighting and winning.

I want to mention some of the guests who are here. Talking about fighting and battles, an incredible warrior for social justice for 20 years, Pura Velasco, is here; Arlinda Insigne from the Filipino association; Yolanda Ladines from the Markham Federation of Filipino Canadians; Cipriano Ladines from the Markham Federation of Filipino Canadians; Evelyn Pagkalinawan, a great volunteer in social housing; my good friend Sister Haydee from Our Lady of the Assumption Church—and Father Ben and Mario and all the people, the grassroots help at the Assumption church. Thank you, Sister.

Natty Nano is here; José Saavedra; Buddy Ibe Librado; Mel Catre—and the member from Parkdale so eloquently described his great work. I know the minister mentioned the Toronto Star. They did great work, as we've mentioned, but the Filipino press and Tony Sicat, the chair of the Filipino press club, have been crying out about this issue for many years, and nobody listened. They should also be commended for the work they did in trying to bring this to light. The Toronto Star highlighted what they've been saying.

I want to congratulate all the people who have been fighting on this front for many, many years. It's really

important that we listen to them. This legislation is a reflection of our attempt to really do something. It's not a Filipino issue; it's a social justice issue.

HEALTHY DECISIONS FOR HEALTHY EATING ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 FAVORISANT DES CHOIX SAINS POUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINNE

M^{me} Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to amend various acts respecting nutritional information and trans fat content of foods and drinks provided by food service premises / *Projet de loi 156, Loi modifiant diverses lois qui traitent de l'information nutritionnelle et de la teneur en gras trans des aliments et boissons fournis par les lieux de restauration.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure to rise before this House today to bring Bill 156, the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, to second reading. Il me fait plaisir de présenter le projet de loi 156, Loi de 2009 favorisant des choix sains pour une alimentation saine.

The need for this bill is apparent in every community across this province. It is undeniable: Ontario is in the midst of an obesity epidemic, and it is no secret that obesity is incredibly costly to both the health care system and the lives of individual Ontarians. Bill 156 aims to take a step towards combating the rising obesity rates in this province.

1500

This bill will not solve the problem of obesity by itself, but it sets the stage for a new era of consumer information and corporate responsibility. It places the tools of healthy eating into the hands of every Ontarian walking into a fast-food establishment. It allows Ontarians to use the knowledge they have to make better choices and it encourages a more nutritionally literate consumer culture.

It has been estimated by the Ontario Medical Association that 60% of Ontario adults are either obese or overweight; a full one quarter of children in this province are obese, and half are also inactive. The Ontario Medical Review, the publication of the Ontario Medical Association, actually had a front page on childhood obesity. We know that 75% of these obese children will grow up to become obese adults.

The health effects of obesity are clear: a higher risk of breast, colon, kidney and esophagus cancer; a higher risk of type 2 diabetes; a higher risk of chronic kidney disease and other chronic illnesses. We have a wait-time strategy in Ontario for hip and knee replacements. If we did not have 60% of our population either overweight or obese, we would not have a waiting list for hip and knee

replacements, because people who are overweight and obese make up the vast majority of people who need hip and knee replacements.

The OMA estimates that the health impact of an overweight and obese population is more than \$2 billion a year—\$2 billion each and every year that would be better spent on keeping people healthy. This is a lot of money being poured down the drain needlessly, if you ask me.

Bill 156 is proactive. It's a public health measure that will be one of many steps needed to reverse the trend of unhealthy eating and unhealthy weight so prevalent in our province. This bill follows in the footsteps of other cities around the world and some US states that have enabled similar legislation. New York City, California and some cities in the United Kingdom have passed laws that mandate food providers to post calorie content directly on their menu. I have copies of some of those menu boards—I don't think I'm allowed to show them, but I will read them to you—that you will recognize.

We've all been to a McDonald's. We've all seen the sandwiches, the menu pack. Well, a quarter pounder is 510 calories; if you want to have a meal deal, it's 290 calories. If you want to upsize this, it's 1,130 calories. I have them for Quiznos, for Starbucks, for Subway, for a juice bar and for Mexican restaurants. It's basically information that is already available—it is available to people in Ontario also—but it is so hard to get. You either have to look on the Internet or you can ask for a brochure that is hidden underneath some counter someplace. Some have it on a poster on the wall. Well, research shows that only one in a thousand people—one in a thousand customers—actually looks at those. Once you put the calorie content on the menu board in the same font as it is for the price, one in two customers will use it to make a healthier choice. It changes everything. The information is available; all we're asking for is to put it on the menu board so that before you make your choice, before you order, you take into account the number of calories in your food.

I would say that Ontario has an opportunity to be a leader in public health. We are standing at a crossroads when it comes to making the connection between food, weight and health outcome. However, I do not think that anyone in this House would agree that food that we consume every single day does not have an impact on our broader health. All the same, some may question the need for that bill.

We would think that everybody is supposed to know that a burger and fries from a fast-food chain is bad for you. But looking at the research around perception of nutritional content is a wake-up call. Studies have found that nine out of 10 people underestimate the calorie content of restaurant food by half the actual calories, or an average of 600 calories lighter. With a conservative estimate of going out to a restaurant just once a week, that 600-calorie underestimation amounts to about 30,000 calories a year, a weight gain of about nine pounds a year. That's not insignificant. Even studies that have used

dieticians as their subjects found that estimations of calories are still off base by a quarter to half of actual content. This means that a seemingly healthy sounding meal like a chicken fajita will be estimated at about 700 calories when it really comes in at 1,660 calories. This is a lot of calories.

The OMA had a nifty board yesterday that showed clearly that when people go to the sub sandwich shop, a lot of people will say, "Well, I chose the tuna because, you know, fish should be healthier, the omega 3 and all that." Well, the tuna melt sandwich in the sandwich shop is 1,230 calories—almost two thirds of what I should eat in a full day, and that's in one sandwich. If you had chosen the BLT or the turkey sandwich, you would have been at about 310 to 470 calories—way lower. So just by looking at the menu items, people are not able to guess. That's why we need clear calorie counts next to the menu items in the same font as the price, so people can make good choices.

I have a list of others that are the same. We talked about hamburgers and fries. People have estimated their content is about 777 calories, when the reality is 1,240. When it comes to fettuccini Alfredo, people would guess about 700 calories, when the reality is 1,500, almost 53% more.

An article in the Ottawa Citizen in December of last year talked about the consequences of food advertising strategies. When it says "low fat", people tend to consume more, but once they see the actual number of calories, people know how to make wise choices. Without actual nutritional information, you may eat a whole-grain fruit muffin instead of that maple dip doughnut, not realizing that the muffin actually has twice the amount of fat and twice the amount of calories than the doughnut. It's hard to make right choices when you don't have the correct information. We know that when consumers are provided with calorie information while ordering, they consume 15% less calories than those who do not have that information. This adds up quickly over a person's lifetime.

The introduction of calorie labelling at the point of purchase has the potential to make small but significant changes to dietary habits over a long period of time. A study published less than a year ago in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* says that "publishing caloric data at the point of purchase" may "increase awareness and change consumer purchasing decisions, leading to fewer calories consumed. Simultaneously, restaurants may then have a greater incentive ... to reformulate their menu, which in turn could also lower caloric intake."

This is exactly what has happened. In New York City, after a very similar bill was introduced, they saw a dramatic drop in some menu items that had very high calories beside them and an increase in some of the menu items that didn't. What also happened is that big stores like Starbucks and Mr. Sub started offering menu items with way lower calorie intake, to give people a choice. This is an opportunity for significant change we have

before us today. It is the kind of change that can have a real impact on the lives of Ontarians, making it easier for them to make healthier choices for themselves and for their families. This is the kind of preventive health care that we need: action that works to keep people well, rather than always investing in treatment while people get sick.

1510

I hope that all members of this House will recognize the opportunity before us today and vote in favour of private member's bill, Bill 156. It is doable, and it will help to improve the health of the people. Why vote that down?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I am privileged and honoured to stand up in my place and comment on Bill 156. I know the member from Nickel Belt has a good record of understanding for health in this province of Ontario, since she worked as a nurse, I believe—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Physiotherapist.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Okay—in health care for many years.

It's important for all of us to recognize the importance of healthy eating. I'm proud to be part of this government. As you know, since we were elected in 2003, we've taken many different important steps toward creating healthy habits, especially in our schools, by banning junk food from school cafeterias, from the vending machines, banning the trans fat, and also creating a good environment and creating awareness among the students across the province. I get the chance and privilege to go to many schools and high schools in my riding of London—Fanshawe to promote healthy eating habits in the schools with a program launched by the Ministry of Health Promotion and the Ministry of Education.

I listened to the member from Nickel Belt speaking about the calories and content and the number and percentage—many different things. But it was a puzzle. We don't want to create some kind of obstacle for many different businesses across Ontario, especially in this difficult time. I know many restaurants and many chains in the province understand the implications and the complex issue of obesity and trans fat and calories, and that's why many of them compete on a regular basis by advertising and trying, as much as possible, to provide healthy food for many people across the province.

I know it's a very difficult task. I know the OMA is trying to push some issues forward, and I know the food chains are trying to create a balance and respond to it, because I know the business people from the restaurant association are very responsible people, and they want to stay in business, no doubt about it.

I remember, while I was in the food business service in my first career, when Kentucky Fried Chicken changed their name from Kentucky Fried Chicken to KFC, because they know the impact from the name, the title on the top—

Mr. Peter Shurman: KFC?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: KFC. They changed it from Kentucky Fried Chicken to KFC because they wanted to attract more people. They also changed the content of the oil and the fat they use. Everybody has an interest in attracting more business and remaining competitive in the market area, because it's difficult. Let me tell you, it's difficult.

But the most important thing: We are, as elected officials, to create a balanced approach, protect our people, and also create some kind of awareness to create a different culture, to create a culture of awareness among our people, because now I think, since we tackled the issues with the students and the schools—we're dealing now with adults. I think we should respect our adults, because the adults know exactly the fat coming from French fries or burgers.

Also, we have to remember that sometimes when we do the combinations with burgers, put toppings on them, we can lower the content of calories by 40%, or some different combinations of drinks can also change the whole balance of calories and nutrition. So we have to take all these elements into our considerations. I'm not an expert in this field. I know my colleague Sophia Aggelonitis from Hamilton Mountain has a lot of expertise in this matter. Also, Dr. Jaczek has great experience. They are going to speak and comment on Bill 156. Again, thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: There's something about bills like this that always attracts me, that always makes me want to speak out. I'm always speaking to bills that remove individual responsibility, because I put great stock in individual responsibility.

To tell you the truth, if this were a college debate as opposed to a debate here in the Legislature, I could probably easily take either side of this, for one very simple reason: I like to be informed about the nutritional value of individual foods, and I work very hard to inform myself. That's the nub of what I want to talk about.

I have debated private member's bills put forward by this member before. I don't mean to patronize her in any way by saying this: I have nothing but respect for her position and the passion she brings to it, but I can't really support the bill. I have to ask the question: Why wouldn't we want to make our own decisions? That is what separates the member for Nickel Belt and myself. I believe in legislation, generally speaking, that protects me from you and you from me.

I don't like legislation that purports to protect me from myself, and that's what this kind of legislation is. We could just sit back and let the government tell us step-by-step what to do and what to think. Certainly there are times when I've spoken in this Legislature when I've said that's precisely what they're trying to do.

I hearken back to a part of my life when I lived in Montreal. A fairly noteworthy mayor by the name of Jean Drapeau was in charge of Montreal at the time. The

debate of the day was whether or not to fluoridate the water. I favoured fluoride in the water for myself, but Monsieur Drapeau said that he didn't want to fluoridate Montreal's water because it imposed a form of medicine on everyone when not everyone would be disposed to taking that medicine. Indeed, there were some conditions that mandated no use of fluorides, and those people would have to drink bottled water, which wasn't even available at the time. So he didn't do it. Notwithstanding that, I favoured it, so I used fluoridated toothpaste and made sure that I got treatments at the dentist.

The point I'm trying to make is, sometimes you want something like the information this member wants to mandate on people, but you want to do it yourself.

Bill 156 wants to force restaurants and foodservice companies to have calorie counts listed on all menus, and it wants to limit trans fat levels. The issue is not what is good to eat and what is not. We all know what a burger and fries every day does to us. That's a terrible thing. It's not something that I want to do, and most thinking people don't want to do it. It's kind of like smokers. Everybody I know who smokes says, "I know that this is a terrible thing to do," but they do it anyway because it's something that they elect to do.

This is really about common sense. If I'm going to eat and I'm going to make an informed choice, is it going to be the burger and fries, or am I going to have whole wheat bread, lettuce, tomato and some turkey breast on it with mustard? The answer is, I'm going to make that choice and I don't need anybody to tell me over the counter that that's what I should choose if I want to be healthy. People who don't want to be healthy are not going to care whether that information is there. We're smart enough to know what is good and what is bad for our health in terms of food content, and we need to take responsibility for our own actions.

Why is there a need, I ask myself, to legislate, to regulate, to mandate everything? The market has controlled this to a very large extent. My friend from London-Fanshawe talked a moment ago about the change in name of Kentucky Fried Chicken. That is an example, to take the word "fried" away so it was rather masked. But that's just cosmetic. If you take a look at some of the other examples, you could cite Subway, the chain that sells submarines. Subway has, because the market wanted it to, created a line of submarine sandwiches that are served on whole wheat bread and have nutritional facts available, because they thought it was good for their marketing. Not all their submarines are like that. You can buy meatballs covered with cheese, and goodness knows how much there is in the way of calories and cholesterol in that. But you can buy the ones that have eight grams of fat and are 200 calories, and those are the ones that, more often than not, I choose to buy, because I'm making an informed decision.

The same thing, if you take a look at McDonald's. You can eat a Big Mac every day if you want, or two or three, or you can give your kid five bucks and say, "Go and buy a salad at McDonald's"—they serve those

now—"and get yourself a chocolate milk." And the kid can go in on his own and buy the Big Mac and the Coke.

These are the kinds of things that will happen unless you educate yourself and your children. The label is not what does it. We have labels at home. We have, if we want to have them, books on the subject. Informed people do that job of informing themselves.

1520

Tim Hortons, for example, is commenting on this bill. They say that if the bill passes, there would be, in these very difficult economic times, an impact as well—additive economic hardship: (1) Some Tim Hortons are located in areas where there is excessive unemployment; (2) We're putting up the minimum wage; (3) We've got the McGuinty grab tax coming in next year. Now you would add a significant cost by saying you have to tell everybody who comes into Tim Hortons how many calories there are in a Boston cream versus how many calories there are in a cruller versus how many calories there are in a Dutchie, and by the way, we have the whole sandwich selection.

Then we've got the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association providing us with statistics, and these statistics are dumbfounding. If I take the same example I used a moment ago of Subway restaurants, if they had five items on the menu—and they don't, but I'll get to that in a minute—with the choices of ingredients you could put in the sandwich, you would have 120 different combinations. So you'd have to do the assessment on 120 different combinations. If they had 10 items on the menu and the same assortment of ingredients to put in the sandwiches, they'd have 3,628,800 combinations to assess, and if they had 15 items on the menu, which Subway restaurants do, by the way, they would have 1.3 trillion combinations. What are you going to do? It's impossible to have a calorie guide for every single menu item—virtually impossible to do.

Another comment comes from the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association. They're expressing concerns around the bill too. They feel that these kinds of changes do not address the real problem. They also feel that the changes should come from the federal government, in order to maintain national standards. There has been an awful lot of comment from a variety of stakeholder groups. Another aspect of this is the fact that you've got regional supply chains. So, even if you go into the same chain restaurants from one jurisdiction to another, you may not get consistent caloric or nutritional value out of exactly the same product because of supply chain differences from one area to another.

So you've got, number one, the issue of being self-informed and, number two, this very serious issue in these very serious times of the costs involved with getting this information. Issues on the cost side include having to send foods to a lab to get accurate testing. How many people know of someone who owns a restaurant and can actually afford to send their foods to a lab to get tested? I realize the bill addresses chains, but it talks about restaurants that do in excess of \$5 million. In

Toronto, we have single restaurants that do in excess of \$5 million.

The latest forecast for food services and restaurant industry sales would show them falling by between 1.5% and 2.5% in 2009. Real food service sales will drop by 4.6%, the largest decline since the 10.6% drop in sales in 1991—thank you very much, Rae days.

I'll conclude by saying there are a lot of reasons to think in terms of knowing what you're eating. I have basic trust in people to be self-informed enough to believe that they do know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't know where you start after a speech like that. In some ways, it's like déjà vu all over again. In some ways, it's like watching every public health battle that has ever been fought in this province and in this country being re-fought with the same arguments that were discredited over decades that have passed.

My colleague the member from Nickel Belt has made a very straightforward, logical argument for a very straightforward bill. I don't know if the words "common sense" have been rehabilitated yet, but I'll use them nonetheless. I think it was a pretty common sense argument that if you tell people what calories they're going to take in, they can make an intelligent decision on their own as to what they're going to buy. That's all. It's an information bill on something that's fairly straightforward: basic food.

The member has made some very good points about the reality of the obesity epidemic in this society. She talks about 60% of adults in this society being overweight and a quarter of children being overweight. That is of consequence. That is of significant consequence. Her example, which was a good one—I didn't know about this—was that we have a waiting list for hip and knee replacements. Most of the people on those waiting lists are overweight. If people weren't overweight, we'd have far less demand for that sort of joint replacement. That is a simple impact on our health care system and our quality of life.

A few years ago I was on a walk for the Hellenic Home for the Aged—a really great charity. They operate in the GTA. They've got a home in Scarborough. I was out there going on the walk, and there was a Dr. Oreopoulos—who's well-respected in the Greek community; he works on dialysis—talking about the flood of patients he had to deal with, the impact of type 2 diabetes, the impact of obesity causing type 2 diabetes, and ultimately the human impact of people who have to be subjected to that operation, whose lives were limited by that kind of procedure, and talking about the need to take on this issue, because it just kept coming at him in waves.

What is brought forward here today is a fairly limited suggestion that people be made fully aware of the nutritional impact of what they consume when they're in a restaurant, not telling them what they can buy—except

for the trans fat part, and I'll speak to that separately—but giving them the information so that, as Mr. Shurman said, they can make their own decisions. It's straightforward. It's not complicated. In this society—frankly, in any human society—knowledge is power. When people have knowledge, they can make decisions. They can make smart decisions, they can make stupid decisions, but they get to make decisions. That seems straightforward.

Knowledge provokes change. It was earlier cited that the Journal of the American Medical Association noted that restaurants and others that had to post the caloric content of the food they served paid attention; reformulated. That makes sense as well. No one wants to be known out there as the "fat city restaurant," the one that guarantees that you will put on weight. There's an opportunity there for knowledge; not just to give people individual power, but for companies, for restaurants, to re-evaluate how they proceed and to offer healthier options to the population as a whole. We in this chamber, on every side, want to ensure that medicare continues for decades to come. If we've going to protect medicare and deal with the rising tide of health care costs in this society, then we have to make sure that people are healthy.

Part of making sure that people are healthy is giving them the information so that they can make intelligent decisions. That's what this bill suggests. What was presented along with the bill was the information that there are jurisdictions like New York and the UK where people are given the information now. Somehow, and I know this sounds bizarre, the restaurants in those jurisdictions have not been forced to close their doors. People are not wandering the streets hungry, bereft of the comfort foods they once knew. No, they could read, they could count and they could make a decision on what they were going to eat. I think it probably works. A wild idea, but actually giving information to people probably actually works and allows restaurants to continue on.

I have to say, I have a number of friends who own restaurants, who work in restaurants, who do, I think, an excellent job. They care about the people they serve, they care about their communities and, frankly, they work hard and they have to make tough decisions. Some of my friends, when I was on Toronto city council in the 1990s and I introduced a smoke-free bar and restaurant bylaw, had tremendous difficulty with that, because their whole business model, over decades, had been premised on allowing people to smoke. They were nervous, they were frightened and, as much as they liked me, they disagreed with me sharply.

At the time, for those who were around, newspapers had stories about how we wouldn't be able to get tourists into Toronto because if people from Germany or from Los Angeles or from New York couldn't smoke, why would they come to Toronto? What would the point be? Restaurants would close and again we would be wandering the streets in large masses, hungry, smokeless, destitute. Once again, a fear put out on the street about taking simple action to protect public health was shown

to be baseless. Not only is North America going smoke-free very largely; it's spreading to Europe and maybe, eventually, China.

1530

I want to say to those who care about health care, who care about the restaurant business, that they should be paying attention to this private member's bill. What is being brought forward today, frankly, I think, will be seen in the rest of the world tomorrow. It's tragic to me that we're behind New York, that we're behind the UK, that we're behind Denmark in trans fats. We want to protect people from heart disease.

A friend of mine, a few years ago—a very vigorous guy, tremendously active—was struck down by a stroke. It changed his life radically. He came back, he got a lot of function but not what he had before, and he misses it. I don't know if trans fats were responsible, but I do know that statistically, a higher level of trans fats in the food supply will result in more heart disease of a variety of kinds that will result in human tragedy. There is no need for us to add to human tragedy in this world. We've got enough. We've got a surplus. Let's reduce it. This act will help take another small step forward. I don't mean to underrate the act, but it's another small step forward in protecting the health of the population and protecting our health care system so that it will be able to deal with the more profound problems that are unavoidable at this point.

There was talk about a balanced approach. There was talk about this being a difficult time. I want to say that this may be a difficult time for all kinds of manufacturers. I'm sure there are people who make products now that are dangerous. There are people who make products that, if those products were consumed by a person, would poison them. But we don't say, "You know, we've got to do something about these companies. Let's get rid of those skull-and-crossbones stickers on the bottle so they can sell more of it." We don't say that we should gut our safety regulations so that we can improve business. No, that would not be moral. It would not be practical. All we're saying here is, there's a risk to human health. It's relatively, easily addressable in a small way, at a cost that is inconsequential, given that it's in place in other jurisdictions and the foodservice industry continues to operate and prosper.

We, in this Legislature, in this chamber this afternoon, can actually say, "Yes, we should take yet another small step forward for the health of the population." I see no reason why this assembly should not support this bill. If it does not, then we will have thrown away another opportunity. It will be much like the beginning of the fight to get smoking out of restaurants, bars and public places, something that's looked back on now as simply a reasonable and sensible thing to do. Let's not repeat some of the mistakes of the past; let's move forward with this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Before I begin, I would like to recognize and welcome the many members from the

restaurant and hospitality industry who have come here to view this very important debate. As someone who has worked in this industry for many years, from a dishwasher to a waitress, bartender and cook, I'd like to thank them for their dedication to one of Ontario's most important industries.

I think every member of this House would agree that helping Ontarians to live a healthy lifestyle is an important priority. That is why I appreciate the spirit of this bill, but in the interest of Ontarians, I believe we have to take a closer look at this bill. I have five concerns which must be given strong consideration in this debate.

First, on average, one in 10 meals eaten by Ontarians is made at a restaurant or a takeout facility. That means that those nine other meals are eaten in our homes, in our kitchens; they are prepared in our kitchens. So what this bill is saying is that we want to make sure you're eating right that one meal, but not those nine meals. If we do that, we run the risk of taking a piecemeal approach, which would not address the root problem.

Secondly, this bill focuses on calories. I believe that we must consider the nutrition and balance of the entire meal—an equation that would include calories but not use them as its sole measurement. For example, a glass of skim milk will have more calories than a diet soda. Using only calories to measure how healthy a food item is could be misleading.

Thirdly, the issue is that we are very fortunate to have a wide variety of restaurants across our province that offer Ontarians a wide variety of food choices that frequently change. This issue of customization is very important for this debate. Consider a specialty coffee shop. You could have tens of thousands of different drinks. If you order a latte with soya milk or skim milk, with sugar or no sugar, it's all customized, and how do we label all of that?

The fourth issue, and a very important issue, is that restaurant ingredients change frequently and supplier substitutions are commonplace. One ingredient can affect the nutritional profile of dozens of items on a menu. For example, when one restaurant chain changes a sauce, it can affect the nutritional composition of 40 menu items.

The other issue we really need to take a look at is trans fats. I am so encouraged by the work Health Canada and the restaurant and hospitality industry have done with the trans fats task force. Their good work has made it clear that this issue is one that would be best addressed by a Canada-wide strategy. Other provinces agree. For example, the Alberta health minister recently said, on March 13, that Alberta will not pursue a province-wide ban on trans fats: "A lot of products used in this province are not manufactured in this province. It would only make sense to have a national strategy."

There is no question that leading a healthy lifestyle is very important to everyone here in this House. However, I do believe that this bill requires a closer look, and that is why I will not support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I don't think anyone would argue that obesity is a problem in our society. However, that obesity is a personal responsibility. I finished my last debate indicating that we get up in the morning and we hope that we can stay on our diet. Some people with more willpower than I have are able to do that and others are not.

This would add increasing onus on the restaurant business. I think it's a well-known fact that restaurant businesses in Canada—in fact, in North America—have some of the highest failure rates of any business. To add further financial responsibilities into that mix through this addition of red tape would only make that situation worse. There is a strong argument that this sort of legislation should come from Ottawa, although I don't have a great deal of confidence in any of the four or five parties in Ottawa to make the right decision in this case.

This bill also segregates the market into two different sizes—over \$5 million and under \$5 million. Anything that separates Canadians, I don't like. I don't think there should be two types of Ontarians, two types of Canadians. I think that we're all Ontarians and we're all Canadians, and I think segregating the market is fundamentally wrong.

Again, dealing with caloric intake of individuals, calories don't tell a very good story in many cases. If you take a glass of milk as opposed to a glass of diet soda, you might find that the milk has far more calories in it—perhaps 100 calories. I don't think anyone would argue as to which of those two beverages would be the most beneficial for people. The same could be said for yogourt and granola, which would be a very healthy choice as opposed to a doughnut or a cruller.

1540

The member from Thornhill made a very good point about customized orders and how 1.3 trillion different combinations could flow out of that story. That would be just a horrendous situation to try to deal with through the red tape that that would create. Customized orders, of course, is something that could go on and on, and you would literally never be able to receive your order at the counter.

I seem to have red tape mentioned twice in my notes. Of course, red tape is something that we, on this side of the House, are somewhat opposed to. I'm pleased to hear that some of the members on that side of the House are also opposed to it. It has been something that, traditionally, the third party kind of falls in love with. Sorry, Peter.

It would also mean more public inspections. Public inspection—we all know what's happened with public sector payrolls. They are sitting at about two thirds of what the increased number of workers are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, there's still time on the clock for our party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Okay. Member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are other people who want to debate as well.

I only have two minutes left on the clock, so I wanted to talk about the fact that the \$5-million cut-off was really put into the bill because we're not after the small mom-and-pop restaurant that's trying to make a living. I know they wouldn't be able to do the calorie count.

The \$5-million limit is really to target restaurants who already have that information; they just don't make the information accessible in a way that can be used by the public to make informed choices. So to have a brochure under a counter and have 15 people behind you pointing their fingers at you to get out of the way because they want to read the little brochure is not workable. When they have it in front of them, 50% of the people use that information to make healthy choices.

When we talk about customized orders, I couldn't agree more. We have the menu board from Starbucks, which advertises 10,000 different drink choices. Guess what? They have the calorie count for each and every one of those 10,000 drinks, and it's really easy to read. It's the same thing with Subway, which advertises being able to make 1,000 different types of sandwiches. Here I have menu board from Subway that shows the calorie count for each of those sandwiches.

There are ways to convey information that can be used. Their graphic designers were really creative and were able to bundle that information into headings where Starbucks, for example, says, "Blended coffee beverage with light base for a third fewer calories." It's up to you to do the one third less, and then the list goes on and on. The same thing with Subway, which says, "For a foot long, add 660 calories," etc. So you get the choice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure to rise in this House in support of Bill 156, which has been brought forward by the member for Nickel Belt.

During the last 18 months or so, I've had the opportunity to listen to Madame Gélinas. I know that her commitment to public health is paramount in all that she does, and I commend her for that. She likes to raise the bar, she likes to push the envelope, and she likes to bring issues of importance to people in this House. This is precisely what private members' public business is all about. She has certainly done it with this particular bill. Certainly there has been considerable attention paid, and she has received endorsements from many, many stakeholders, in particular the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Public Health Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and many, many others.

There is a crisis with our children. We have an epidemic of obesity. It has been said before today, and we'll say it again: One quarter of Ontario's children are obese, and we know that three quarters of those children who are obese will go on to become obese adults. They will be more likely to have cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and those chronic diseases obviously hamper those individual lives, but they are also very costly for our society to manage.

Having calories displayed prominently at the time of purchase is a step forward. It is a good step forward. It's going to allow our young people to make healthy choices. To quote Dr. Ken Arnold, president of the Ontario Medical Association, "Ontario's doctors are not telling people what they can and can't eat, but when you do eat out, you should know how many calories you are consuming." Earlier this afternoon, during the debate on the resolution of the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, one of our colleagues talked about the right to know, how important that was in today's society. Well, here we have an excellent example of the public wanting this information.

I think most people know I am a physician, but along the way I did earn a master's of business administration and I understand what competitive advantage is. In fact, I remember extremely well that before the region of York's no-smoking bylaw was enacted, a particular Tim Hortons decided to go smoke-free. A large banner was displayed. People flocked to that Tim Hortons. I believe that in a similar way, those restaurants, food service establishments with gross sales annually of more than \$5 million, will well be able to have that information, and I believe that when they start to display this, perhaps on a voluntary basis, that they too will also have a competitive advantage.

I think it's extremely important to support this bill and allow it to go to committee. More debate, obviously, is important, but I would encourage everybody in this House to give it their full attention, their full consideration, and allow us to stand up and make a statement on behalf of the health of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt now has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the members for London–Fanshawe, Thornhill, Toronto–Danforth, Hamilton Mountain and Oak Ridges–Markham for their remarks.

I would like to use my last two minutes to read from different health care organizations and what they have to say. I know that the member from Thornhill and the members from Hamilton and London–Fanshawe spent a lot of time explaining to you the position of the restaurant industry toward the bill. I now want you to have the flip side: the health industry's position towards the bill.

I'll start with the Ontario Public Health Association's president-elect, who is Liz Haugh. She says, "The measures proposed in Bill 156 provide a unique opportunity to empower consumers to make healthy choices and to foster a climate of corporate social responsibility that bolsters consumer confidence and the economic strength of the province. Our provincial investment in health promotion has produced a significant public interest in health and nutrition which should be leveraged to inspire leadership in these issues to the rest of Canada."

Now to the president of the Registered Nurses' Association, Wendy Fucile. She says, "Ontario nurses fully support this bill because it would require full food

establishments to limit the amount of artificial trans fats in the foods they prepare. This is important because trans fats are associated with increased risk of heart disease and early death."

I also have a quote from Bill Jeffery from the Centre for Science in the Public Interest: "Bill 156 offers a sound means of nutritionally informing choice in large chain restaurants and ridding the food supply of a dangerous additive"—that is, trans fats.

I also want to quote Ken Arnold, president of the OMA: "We are calling on the government to enact legislation that will require calorie content to be listed adjacent to the items on menus and menu boards at chain restaurants."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Private members' public business having concluded before the expiry of the allotted 2.5 hours, pursuant to standing order 98(e), I am now required to suspend the House until 3:58 p.m.

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order: I seek unanimous consent to carry on the work of the House without the suspension.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): I thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. It's my understanding that in private members' public business, we cannot unanimously consent to have an earlier vote. All the members who are not in this House have an understanding that the debate will be taking place for 2.5 hours.

This House is suspended until 3:58 p.m.

The House suspended proceedings from 1550 to 1558.

CORPORATE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Ms. Broten has moved private member's notice of motion number 81. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CAREGIVER AND FOREIGN WORKER RECRUITMENT AND PROTECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RECRUTEMENT ET LA PROTECTION DES FOURNISSEURS DE SOINS ET DES TRAVAILLEURS ÉTRANGERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Mr. Colle has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act respecting the recruitment and protection of caregivers and foreign workers. Is it the pleasure of House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Would the member like to refer—to which committee?

Mr. Mike Colle: The committee of the whole.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): The bill is referred to the committee of the whole.

HEALTHY DECISIONS
FOR HEALTHY EATING ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009
FAVORISANT DES CHOIX SAINS
POUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINÉ

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Ms. Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 156, An Act to amend various acts respecting nutritional information and trans fat content of foods and drinks provided by food service premises. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In the opinion of the Speaker, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is going to be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1600 to 1605.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
Brotten, Laurel C.
Colle, Mike
Duguid, Brad
Gélinas, France
Jaczek, Helena
Kormos, Peter

Kular, Kuldip
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Moridi, Reza
Pendergast, Leeanna

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Tabuns, Peter
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chudleigh, Ted

Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Hardeman, Ernie
Jeffrey, Linda
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou

Ruprecht, Tony
Shurman, Peter
Sousa, Charles
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 16.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): I ask the member which committee she would like to refer the bill to.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Social policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Yasir Naqvi): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m., Monday, April 20, 2009.

The House adjourned at 1607.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Rural Ontario

Mrs. Liz Sandals	6045
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6045

Violent crime

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6046
Hon. George Smitherman.....	6046

Highway improvement

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6046
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	6046

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6047
--------------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Passover

Mr. Peter Shurman	6047
-------------------------	------

Barbara LaFleshe

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6047
----------------------	------

Mohawk College

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis.....	6047
-----------------------------	------

Earthquake in Italy

Mr. Ted Arnott	6047
----------------------	------

Rouge Park

Mr. Wayne Arthurs	6048
-------------------------	------

Lake Simcoe

Mrs. Julia Munro.....	6048
-----------------------	------

Vaisakhi

Mr. Bob Delaney.....	6048
----------------------	------

Passover

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6049
---------------------	------

Easter

Mr. Charles Sousa.....	6049
------------------------	------

MOTIONS

Committee membership

Hon. Peter Fonseca	6049
Motion agreed to	6049

Committee membership

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6049
Motion agreed to	6049

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6049
----------------------	------

Air quality

Mr. Charles Sousa	6050
-------------------------	------

Pension plans

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6050
-------------------------	------

Lupus

Mr. Bob Delaney	6050
-----------------------	------

Cemeteries

Mr. Kuldip Kular.....	6050
-----------------------	------

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6051
---------------------	------

Pension plans

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6051
-------------------------	------

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6051
---------------------	------

Beer retailing and distribution

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6051
-------------------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Corporate reporting requirements

Ms. Laurel C. Broten.....	6051
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6054
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6055
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6056
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	6057
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	6058
Ms. Laurel C. Broten.....	6058

Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, Bill 160, Mr. Colle / Loi de 2009 sur le recrutement et la protection des fournisseurs de soins et des travailleurs étrangers, projet de loi 160, M. Colle

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6059
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6060
Mr. Bob Delaney	6061
Mme France Gélinas	6062
Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	6063
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6063
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6064

**Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, 2009, Bill
156, Mme Gélinas / Loi de 2009 favorisant des
choix sains pour une alimentation saine, projet de
loi 156, Mme Gélinas**

Mme France Gélinas.....	6064
Mr. Khalil Ramal	6066
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	6066
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6068
Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis	6069
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6070
Mme France Gélinas.....	6070
Ms. Helena Jaczek	6070
Mme France Gélinas.....	6071

Corporate reporting requirements

Motion agreed to.....	6071
-----------------------	------

**Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and
Protection Act, 2009, Bill 160, Mr. Colle / Loi de
2009 sur le recrutement et la protection des
fournisseurs de soins et des travailleurs étrangers,
projet de loi 160, M. Colle**

Second reading agreed to.....	6071
-------------------------------	------

**Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, 2009, Bill
156, Mme Gélinas / Loi de 2009 favorisant des
choix sains pour une alimentation saine, projet de
loi 156, Mme Gélinas**

Second reading agreed to.....	6072
-------------------------------	------

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 9 April 2009 / Jeudi 9 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Wearing of pins

Hon. Michael Chan 6025

Budget Measures Act, 2009, Bill 162, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2009 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 162, M. Duncan

Mr. Michael Prue 6025

Mrs. Amrit Mangat 6030

Mr. Ted Chudleigh 6030

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 6030

Mr. Khalil Ramal 6031

Mr. Michael Prue 6031

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll 6031

Mr. Ted Chudleigh 6034

Mr. Michael Prue 6034

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll 6034

Second reading debate deemed adjourned 6035

Wearing of pins

Mr. Dave Levac 6035

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Dave Levac 6035

Mr. Frank Klees 6035

Ms. Cheri DiNovo 6035

Referral of Bill 147

Hon. Monique M. Smith 6035

Motion agreed to 6035

Holodomor Memorial Day Act, 2009, Bill 147, Mr. Levac, Ms. DiNovo, Mr. Klees / Loi de 2009 sur le Jour commémoratif de l'Holodomor, projet de loi 147, M. Levac, Mme DiNovo, M. Klees

Third reading agreed to 6036

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop 6036

Hon. Monique M. Smith 6036

Hon. Michael Chan 6036

Mme France Gélinas 6036

Hon. Jim Watson 6036

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur 6036

Mr. Gilles Bisson 6036

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters) 6036

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters) 6036

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government accountability

Mr. Robert W. Runciman 6036

Hon. Dwight Duncan 6037

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman 6037

Hon. Margaret R. Best 6037

Pension plans

Ms. Andrea Horwath 6038

Hon. Dwight Duncan 6038

Automotive industry

Ms. Andrea Horwath 6039

Hon. Dwight Duncan 6039

Taxation

Mr. Ted Arnott 6040

Hon. Monique M. Smith 6040

Unemployment

Mr. Paul Miller 6041

Hon. Dwight Duncan 6041

Cultural funding

Mr. Mike Colle 6041

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll 6041

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 6042

Hydro rates

Mr. John Yakabuski 6042

Hon. George Smitherman 6042

Infectious disease control

Ms. Andrea Horwath 6043

Hon. George Smitherman 6043

Provincial purchasing policy

Mr. Joe Dickson 6043

Hon. Ted McMeekin 6043

Green power generation

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 6044

Hon. George Smitherman 6044

Affordable housing

Ms. Cheri DiNovo 6044

Hon. Jim Watson 6045

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N
XI
-D23



No. 136

N° 136

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 20 April 2009

Lundi 20 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 avril 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm very pleased to recognize four physicians from the Canadian Dermatology Association: Dr. Cheryl Rosen, Dr. Peter Vignevich, Dr. Lisa Kellett and Dr. Vince Bertucci. They're here to conduct a skin cancer screening clinic from approximately 11:30 to 2 p.m. in room 228. I'd encourage all members to go. Two years ago I went to this clinic, and they discovered I had skin cancer. I was treated as a result of the preventive measures. So I'd urge members to go, and I want to thank the members of the Canadian Dermatology Association for being with us today and providing this clinic for all members, staff and journalists. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce representatives today from ACTRA Toronto: Heather Allin-Pres, Wendy Crewson, Peter Keleghan, Mayko Nguyen, Gordon Pinsent, Art Hindle and Brian Topp. Thank you all for coming today.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted: Today we have as guests, in the east members' gallery, Hans and Gertrud Feldmann. They are with us from Parry Sound, formerly farmers from the Listowel area.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to introduce Bev Currie, the mother of page Robyn Currie, and her grandparents Alan and Helen Currie.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Good morning. It's my pleasure to introduce, from my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, William Burch, a student who is with us today.

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to welcome Andrew Vellathottam and Nicole Hawkins, chairs of the Ontario Medical Students Association, along with 45 medical students and residents, who are joining us at Queen's Park today for the Ontario Medical Association and PAIRO medical student day. Thanks to the Ontario Medical Association for hosting this.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Deputy Premier. It deals with the McGuinty sales tax.

Every single day, more and more victims of Dalton McGuinty's indifferent attitude toward taxpayers are coming forward. It's becoming clear that the Premier went ahead with this tax grab behind the backs of his own caucus.

Sorry, that should be going to the Premier. I was told he wasn't going to be here.

Once again, as you tried in 2004, you're nickel-and-diming hard-working people for tax on meals at restaurants, coffee shops, hospital waiting rooms: déjà vu all over again in the form of a soup-and-sandwich tax.

Premier, are you not at all concerned that Ontarians—seniors, students, young families, those on fixed incomes—are realizing that you went ahead with this tax grab without thinking it through?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. First of all, I want to assure him and Ontarians that we spent a lot of time thinking about this. We weighed the fact that what is happening out there, globally speaking, is very, very big. It is proving to be powerful and very persistent.

Some, like my honourable colleague, would argue that there's no need for us to do anything, that the world as it existed before this worldwide recession will somehow return to us and everything will be restored to its natural order. We don't believe that. We think we've got to do something; we have to do it together.

I know that what I'm asking of Ontarians is not easy; I understand that. But I think it's absolutely essential that we find a way to move forward together. That's why we're going to move ahead with a single sales tax. That's why we're going to cut personal income taxes and cut corporate taxes. We have to do these things to put ourselves on a stronger footing so we can seize new possibilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Our caucus was relentless in fighting the Premier's earlier attempt at a soup-and-sandwich tax grab, and we're prepared to do it again. We know, and I think Ontarians know, that this is nothing more than a different wolf in the same McGuinty clothing.

My colleague from Simcoe North said it perfectly in 2004, after you backed away from the soup-and-sandwich tax: "Hold on to your wallets, because who knows what Dalton will go after next?"

It was a shameless tax attempt, and again we're seeing that there's nothing this Premier isn't prepared to go after to feed his tax cravings, even if it means taxing a family going for an ice cream, or young people getting a slice of pizza on the way to work.

Premier, how can you not see that this sales tax is a full-bore attack on seniors going out for a coffee, on a parent taking her daughter and friends to a local restaurant for a birthday party, on students and on families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One hundred and thirty other countries have done this, as have four other provinces. I think that even my honourable colleague would admit, in a dispassionate and objective way, that this is the kind of step that has been recommended by thoughtful economists for a long, long time.

The reason that my honourable colleague did not do it when he was in government, and the reason that the NDP did not do it in government, is because it is fraught with political risk, to be honest. It is fraught with political risk. But we've been hired on to do a particular job on this side of the House, and that is to provide leadership. The world as we knew it before the recession has left us. My friends may think it's going to be the same and we need do nothing to make ourselves stronger. I disagree with that. That is why, as we move forward, we're cutting personal income taxes in the province of Ontario for 93% of Ontarians. We think that's going to be very helpful as they proceed with grappling with the new single sales tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, in terms of sincerity, I want to quote the Premier: "You don't have to spend too much time outside of this place to talk to real people at the street level to gain an understanding that there is simply no tolerance whatsoever left for increased taxes in this province. People have had it up to here and beyond when it comes to taxes."

That was you, Premier, in 1994, speaking to Bob Rae, whose tax-and-spending deficit and debt-building records you've smashed. Now you are going after soup and sandwiches.

Approximately 1.5 million meals priced under \$4 are sold every day in our province. Approximately 86% of all meals in school cafeterias are priced under \$4, Premier.

Premier, are you and your colleagues, your silent backbenchers, bankrupt to the point where you feel the need to force seniors and kids to pay a tax on a cup of coffee or a sandwich?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague would like to take a look at the package in a more fulsome manner, and I'll speak to that now.

We are going to proceed with a tax cut for 93% of Ontarians: We're going to provide families earning less than \$160,000 with \$1,000 in payments; individuals earning less than \$80,000 with \$300 in payments. There's a new Ontario sales tax credit—\$260 each for adults and children—which is permanent annual tax relief. We're also going to ensure, for example, that a single parent on social assistance with two children will save over \$1,200 under our new plan; a single parent earning \$25,000 with one child will save over \$1,100 under our tax plan.

Again, I'm saying it is not easy, but it's essential, and we've done it in a way that protects the overwhelming majority of Ontario families.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier: I'd like to read into the record an e-mail I received from a constituent of one of the Liberal backbenchers. "Mr. Runciman please see the latest letter I have sent to Mr. Duncan trying to get answers ... as you can see Mr. Duncan doesn't even feel he needs to respond to a citizen, with a legitimate question and concern. This level of Liberal arrogance is beyond my understanding...."

Premier, do you feel it's acceptable to a hard-working family that the Minister of Finance doesn't care enough to respond to an Ontarian's very real and legitimate concern about your latest tax increase not once, but twice?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to commend the Minister of Finance in his absence. He's working hard. He's on the road now to speak to foreign investors in our bond. I can say that the minister, like every member of our caucus, has given careful thought as to what we need to do together to strengthen ourselves.

My friend opposite believes that we need do nothing. He believes firmly in the power of inaction. We reject that. We think our world has changed. We think we have to take certain kinds of steps. We think that we've been given a special responsibility to demonstrate leadership. That's what we're doing. We're doing it in a way that protects the overwhelming majority of Ontario families. We're doing it in a way that will strengthen our businesses and make them more competitive so they can create more jobs and hire more of us, and generate the wealth to support our schools, our hospitals and supports for our vulnerable. That's why we're moving in that direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This is a constituent of a Liberal backbencher, a backbencher who was led down the garden path by this Premier and his Minister of Finance who was signing a deal with the federal government behind the backs of his own caucus. They have a clear and direct question about your sales tax grab.

I want to quote directly from what the constituent has asked the Minister of Finance not once, but twice:

"Although we have firmed up our offer to purchase prior to the budget announcement, our possession date will fall outside the deadline of June 2010 where the effect of the additional PST may be added. The PST will cause an approximate \$40,000 difference in additional costs to our new home purchase.

"My question is ... will the PST component be grandfathered backward for people in our situation?"

Premier, is the Minister of Finance incapable of answering this question or simply choosing to ignore this hard-working family?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind members of this House that my honourable colleague the leader of the official opposition, when first asked about the single sales tax, said that in principle he supports such a tax, so I'm just wondering why he might have changed his mind at this point in time.

I want to remind Ontarians that we put in place a complete exemption from the new single sales tax and its provincial component for homes up to \$400,000. It's phased in between \$400,000 and \$500,000. The overwhelming majority of new home purchases in the province of Ontario are valued at less than \$400,000. That means the overwhelming majority of Ontario families who buy brand new homes will not be encountering any new expenses.

Again, what I'm saying to Ontario families and businesses is we need to do this together; we need to make ourselves stronger; we need to become more competitive; we need to generate more wealth to support all those public services that all our families count on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Premier, this is a huge issue with significant implications. Thousands of Ontarians have made commitments on new homes with closing dates after July 1 of next year. They have a right to know now whether your tax grab will hit them. The Minister of Finance has refused to answer. I have to ask, is this just another indication that you people don't have a clue about what you're doing over there?

This appears to be the standard McGuinty approach to tax policy: Never properly think it through, break your promises, grab the money and run and then let the chips fall where they may.

Premier, is that what this is all about: McGuinty government incompetence?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always grateful for the positive encouragement from my colleague opposite. I obviously have a different perspective than does he on this particular matter, as in so many others, but I appreciate the vibrant debate that this question period gives me an opportunity to engage in.

Again, our world has changed. We need to do certain kinds of things in the province of Ontario to make ourselves stronger, to ensure that we always have the capacity to turn to our children and say: "In the time of this great recession, we took a difficult step, but we knew it was an essential step. We did it so that you could have good schools and your kids will have good schools. We did it so that you could have good health care and your family will have access to good health care. We did this so that if anybody in your family needs supports because they're most vulnerable, we've got the capacity collectively to provide those kinds of supports. We did it to ensure that our businesses could compete in a global economy so that they could create more jobs and hire more of us and generate more wealth." That's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Here's the state of Ontario's economy: After more than five years on this government's watch, 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost, an unemployment rate in this province

soon to hit double digits and a confused, bewildered government which has no answers to the pension crisis, no answers to the auto crisis and no answers to the crisis in forestry and mining. Why is this government failing these industries, these workers and these families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I think I said a few times in this House, the most recent estimate from the United Nations is that we are going to lose from 40 million to 50 million jobs worldwide. Notwithstanding my honourable colleague's effort to indict the government here at Queen's Park with exclusive responsibility for a worldwide recession, I just don't believe Ontarians are prepared to accept that.

We are going to continue to move forward with our five-point plan. We're going to continue to invest in the things that will make us stronger. We will also move ahead with corporate tax cuts. We're going to move ahead with more supports for people who are losing their jobs, more supports for communities that are caught up in this distress caused by a worldwide recession. As well, we're going to cut taxes for Ontarians; 93% of Ontarians will experience a tax cut.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While this government is struggling for answers, Ontario workers went through another long and agonizing weekend. Here are some examples. In Sudbury, the Vale Inco shutdown will affect 5,000 workers, leaving the Sudbury nickel mine silent this summer. There's an eight-week closure at the Xstrata copper smelter near Timmins. And AbitibiBowater, as we all know, filed for bankruptcy. In response, this government had a photo op in Chapleau that created less than 40 jobs.

Does this government think that a photo op and 40 jobs make up for the tens of thousands of jobs that have been lost across northern Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague may be dismissive of 40 jobs in Chapleau, but I was in Chapleau and had an opportunity to speak with the people there, the young entrepreneurs in an organization that is 51% owned by the aboriginal community in that part of Ontario. They're very proud of the effort that they're making, very proud of those jobs that they're creating. I'm very proud to associate with that business and to help put them on a stronger financial footing going forward.

My friend may be dismissive of those kinds of steps, and there are a myriad of them that we're taking around this province, but that's exactly the kind of approach that we will continue to take: work with entrepreneurs, work with our communities and create those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know it's a similar story across southern Ontario as well. GM and Chrysler are on the verge of bankruptcy. Jobs and pensions are on the line, yet we hear precious little from this government. Why is the government standing on the sidelines while

the financial security of tens of thousands of Ontario families hangs in the balance?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I really don't understand where my honourable colleague is coming from on this score. She knows that we have been working with the federal government, together with Washington, to do what we can together to lend support to an auto sector that is struggling in North America. We've now put forward over \$1 billion in support by way of short-term financing, for GM and Chrysler in particular. We are encouraging Chrysler and CAW to pursue their negotiations. We stand at the ready to play a still greater role. We understand that, globally, we are the only subnational jurisdiction that is at the table when it comes to supporting our auto sector. So again, I just don't understand where my colleague is coming from when she says that we're not there for the auto sector and autoworkers in Ontario.

1050

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps I can help the Premier, because there's more. In Niagara, at John Deere, GM, Vale Inco and Abitibi, thousands of good-paying jobs are gone or in doubt. The backbone of Niagara's entire economy—down the drain. What does the Premier have to say to the hard-working people of Niagara region?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would say don't give in to the pessimism, the negativity and the gloomy outlook of the opposition. That is just not helpful.

I understand that these are challenging times and that many of our families have been affected and, indeed, have been hurt by this. But I want to reassure them that they have a government in place that will never give up on them and never give in to that negativity and that pessimism. That's why we're continuing to move ahead with our budget. Notwithstanding these difficult financial times, we can assure our families we are investing more in their schools, in their health care, in supports for the vulnerable. We're going to build new hospitals in that part of Ontario as well. We're also investing in more training opportunities for folks who have lost their jobs.

So again, I want to say that we understand these are difficult times, that they are up against it, but I want them to know this government is in their corner.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's budget answer was the wrong answer. Here's what their answer was: more than \$4 billion in corporate tax cuts, not to the companies that are hurting, but to profitable corporations. This government is giving away billions and billions of dollars to companies that do not need it and standing idly by while the jobs and pensions of tens of thousands of people disappear. How does this government justify the choices that it is making?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just so we put things in some perspective here, the budget is about building both

a more competitive and caring Ontario. While we have cut business taxes—we will be cutting business taxes by \$4.5 billion over three years—we're cutting them for people by \$10.6 billion over three years. At the same time, we are investing in more affordable housing; we're investing in more health care, more education, more post-secondary education. We're putting \$32.5 billion into infrastructure to create those hospitals, schools, roads and public transit that benefit our communities and create 300,000 jobs in the short order, exactly when we need them. I would just ask my colleague to bring a more balanced, more measured consideration to the facts that make up our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The \$4-billion corporate tax giveaway is the wrong policy at the wrong time. It's based on bad economics, plain and simple. The focus should be on sustaining jobs and protecting pensions. That's what Ontarians need to get through these extraordinarily difficult times, but that's not what the government is doing. When will this government admit it made the wrong choice when we, as a province, and the people of this province can least afford it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We took a lot of time to consider the advice that we have received. I'm not sure any Minister of Finance has ever engaged in more consultation than did Minister Duncan in preparation for the budget that we recently introduced in this House. These are very difficult times. It's the greatest economic crisis we've had to grapple with in 80 years. And it's not just affecting us and the rest of Canada or the US; it's affecting the world.

We thought it was important to send a strong signal to the rest of the world that we understand the significance of this crisis before us and that it's important for us to take bold steps, and that's what we are doing. We're moving ahead with a single sales tax, we are cutting taxes for 92% of Ontarians, we are reducing business taxes so that our businesses can grow stronger and become more competitive and create more jobs. It's not an easy thing to do, but we believe it is absolutely essential to get Ontario on a firmer footing.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Minister, as you know, the golf club course sector is a very important part of our tourism industry here in the province, providing tens of thousands of jobs, many to students, billions of dollars of investments, and of course they've had some difficult times as well. Minister, can you explain to the House today who your government consulted with in the golf club sector, as well as the tourism sector, before proceeding with the 8% tax harmonization increase?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As the member knows, the Minister of Finance consulted broadly in the leadup to the budget. We also had the Standing Committee on Fi-

nance and Economic Affairs that travelled across the province, and the Minister of Finance did extensive consultations with a variety of stakeholders. I, too, have met with a number of our stakeholders in tourism, and I look forward to the \$40 million that will be flowing to our tourist destination marketing organization, starting with the single sales tax next year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, maybe you should have consulted with some of your Liberal friends. I have a quote: "But let me repeat, so there's no doubt about it. No Liberal Party with a brain in its head is going to raise taxes in the middle of a recession." That was said by Michael Ignatieff last week, on April 16.

Minister, I made a point last week of contacting the owners of 10 golf courses. I asked them, with the 8% tax increase in the cost to their customers, how it would impact jobs, and in particular student jobs. They unanimously agreed that the HST would—

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, you might think it's funny. It's costing us jobs here, if you don't have a clue.

They unanimously agreed that the HST would have a negative impact and that between three and seven jobs would be lost on each golf course. Minister, that's an average of 50 jobs on 10 golf courses in one small part of the province. As Minister of Tourism, what will you do to ensure that no further jobs are lost in the tourism sector as a result of your HST—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As the member well knows, and as the Premier has discussed on a number of occasions this morning, by moving to a single sales tax, we'll make our tax system more efficient, saving business costs on their investment inputs, and that will be a saving of more than \$500 million a year in paperwork costs alone. This will make Ontario more competitive and will lead to more jobs and new investment.

We're also cutting taxes for small businesses, which, as the member knows, are the backbone of tourism across the province, and this will help create jobs and grow even stronger businesses. The corporate income tax rate for small businesses will be cut by 18%. Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in Canada to eliminate the small business deduction surtax, removing a significant barrier for growth for many of our small businesses. We're also lowering the general income tax rate for corporations to 12% from 14% on July 1, 2010, and to 10% in 2013.

We are helping our small businesses, including those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today's Toronto Star reports that 450 organizations criticized the McGuinty

government's poverty reduction bill because it doesn't require governments to work for a poverty-free Ontario. Will the minister commit now to include the goal of poverty elimination in the bill or does the minister accept that Ontarians, particularly those with no children, should suffer poverty, hunger, homelessness and sickness from now until all eternity?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, I am committed to reducing poverty for all people in this province. We have made a very big step forward. We have released the first poverty reduction strategy. The legislation that is before committee today and tomorrow takes it further, so that subsequent governments will be mandated to bring forth comprehensive poverty reduction strategies going forward.

There is a lot of work to be done. Clearly we have a long way to go, but we're taking very important steps: the first step, the release of the strategy; the second step with the legislation.

I say to the member once again that we need the support of all people in this House if we want to reduce poverty in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: If the minister truly wanted to help all people, there wouldn't have been 2% coming next November for all those people who don't have children.

Sarah Blackstock of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction says this: The purpose of poverty reduction strategies must be to create a poverty-free Ontario and the bill should explicitly say that. If that's not the goal, why are we doing this?" The very first clause in Quebec's successful poverty reduction act commits the government "to strive toward a poverty-free Quebec." Why won't the McGuinty government listen to and give hope to the men and women in Ontario who are hurting the most and commit now to work for an Ontario without poverty?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier, today and tomorrow the committee will be hearing from a number of people. I know that there are written submissions coming from others. I can tell you that we're going to listen very carefully to what people have to say. We want this legislation to be strong, to be meaningful. I think it's very important, though, to acknowledge that we are a leading jurisdiction in the world when it comes to poverty reduction, and I'm proud of that record. I look forward to hearing what people have to say, and we will carefully consider the recommendations that we hear.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Last week and over the weekend, I've seen stories in the newspaper and on television about the closure of Conquest Vacations. Many individuals and families seem to have been caught off guard by this news. Travellers who

are currently on a Conquest holiday are obviously very worried. We've been hearing of hotels threatening to block travellers from leaving unless they pay outrageous fees on top of what they originally paid Conquest.

As the minister responsible for consumer protection here in Ontario, can you tell me what is being done to ensure that travellers already abroad get home safely and that consumers who have purchased travel services from Conquest will be compensated?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: First of all, I really want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for asking this question. Conquest Vacations, Inc. actually voluntarily terminated their wholesale registration and operations after 37 years in business, and that has caused some inconvenience to the travellers and vacationers who have been vacationing outside.

We are very fortunate that in Ontario, consumers are protected by the Travel Industry Act, 2002, and the travel industry compensation fund. I'm going to be very pleased to outline some of the things that TICO, the organization that is responsible for the management of this act and for the compensation fund, has been doing. They have put an advisory on the website informing travellers what to do, but they also have worked very aggressively with chartering planes and with other carriers to bring all the vacationers back home to Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Minister, I'm glad to hear that TICO is taking these steps to ensure consumers can enjoy their holidays uninterrupted and return home to Ontario safely. However, there are still many consumers who purchased Conquest travel services who have not yet departed and whose travel plans have been cancelled due to Conquest's closure.

Minister, as we all know, these are challenging economic times and Ontario families, more than ever, are conscious of how they spend their hard-earned money. Ontario consumers want to be reassured that they will be reimbursed, whether it's through their credit card provider or other means. Can you tell me what steps are being taken to ensure customers who have purchased Conquest vacations and have not yet taken them will not lose any of their hard-earned money because of the company's closure?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: As I said, Ontario consumers actually are protected by the travel industry compensation fund; we are one of three provinces in Canada that have this fund established, which protects consumers. But in addition to that, I want to say this fund actually is well funded. There's about \$29 million in this fund. TICO is working very aggressively with all the people who have booked their vacations so that their claims can be processed as quickly as possible, so that they are not out of pocket on any of these items.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Despite the fact that

there is scientific, documented proof of serious health effects from exposure to wind turbines, you have thus far refused to conduct full, independent assessments of these health effects. As you know, there have been people appearing before the committee indicating the adverse effects that they have suffered. Having heard some of the evidence, Minister, are you prepared to address the issue and do an analysis of the health concerns that have been brought forward?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for the question and I want to thank the members of the legislative committee who spent a considerable amount of last week hearing from a wide variety of perspectives on the Green Energy Act.

We know that there is a tremendous amount of support for the Green Energy Act. We also know that some concerns are raised around health matters and we think it's incredibly important that we take those very seriously. As the committee hearings continue to go forward, there will be opportunity for people to bring amendments, as an example. But at the heart of it, what we intend to do through the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment is to establish universally strong setbacks across the province of Ontario, unlike the patchwork quilt which has emerged so far, that are designed with the best science in mind related to the natural environment, and certainly related to human health.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, I didn't hear a "yes" from the minister indicating that they were going to do any health study regarding the adverse health effects that have been reported by people appearing before the committee. Whether it's migraines, whether it's sleeplessness or a list of other health effects, they are quite numerous.

I know that you're going to hear from individuals this week who are going to continue to provide you with evidence—scientific evidence—from around the world. Will you, after hearing the evidence this week, take it all into consideration and will you finally do the health study that is necessary to reassure the public that there will not be adverse health effects, which people are already suffering to date?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think what this debate has shown, which is kind of interesting, is that that party has reverted to a position of supporting coal as part of our energy supply mix. I want to remind the former health minister that the Ontario Medical Association—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: Oh, they don't like it, but several of them are on a record called Hansard where they talked about coal. We know that the Ontario Medical Association has said that between 2,000 and 3,000 people in the province of Ontario died prematurely, associated with coal. It's interesting to see their policy critic articulating their view in favour of coal.

But on this matter of health concerns—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: Oh, a sensitive subject, I think. But on this matter of health concerns related to wind turbines, yes, we're taking very seriously the con-

cerns that are being raised. We expect for the Ministry of the Environment to put in place very, very strong protections for human health and we'll listen very carefully to reports that have come from all over the world around—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PUBLIC HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The Ontario acting chief medical officer of health released his report on the management of the listeriosis outbreak that killed 16 Ontarians. Dr. Williams's report paints a disturbing picture of a public health system that failed to communicate with the general public. It gets even worse: It relied on Maple Leaf executives to do that work.

Families and friends of the 16 people who died from this outbreak deserve to know that it won't happen again. What Ontarians want to know is, why was the minister missing in action?

Hon. David Caplan: I think the member lets her rhetoric get carried away. Quite frankly, Dr. Williams and his team in public health did an outstanding job protecting Ontarians. It was because of the lessons that we learned from SARS that the IPHIS system was put in place and, through a number of instances that were found around the province, they were able to piece together these different pieces of evidence to be able to alert federal officials to the fact that they believed that there was a food-borne illness.

Dr. Williams and his team did an outstanding job to protect the public health of Ontarians. Notwithstanding the member's comments, I want to thank Dr. Williams here and now—as I have had the chance to privately—for the kind of work and dedication that his team, the Ontario lab system and the Ontario public health network have put in place to protect the health and safety of Ontarians. That will be in place in the future to ensure that Ontarians have the kind of public health—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The fact remains that in the post-SARS era, Ontario's public health system failed to communicate to the public. It is six years post-SARS and nothing has changed. There are still 13 out of 36 health units that lack a permanent, full-time medical officer of health; yet the decision to communicate to the public continues to be left to the discretion of the medical officer of health. How many more fiascos like this need to happen before this minister takes public health seriously?
1110

Hon. David Caplan: Again, the member's rhetoric doesn't match up with the facts. The facts are these: We have learned the lessons of SARS and put in place the public health network, which was able to detect it. In fact, we have, after years of downloading begun under the New Democratic Party, begun to upload public health costs—

Interjection.

Hon. David Caplan: I hear the member from Welland say he's sorry, but I'm sorry, sir: The fact is that that is the history, the sorry legacy of the New Democrats to download these costs onto municipalities. That's why, under this government, we have uploaded those costs. As well, we have provided a tremendous increase in resources to public health. Dr. Williams did indicate the need for a federal lead in a national food-borne illness outbreak, and we have made those recommendations to our federal counterparts at the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. I hope that they—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, first of all let me thank you for visiting the riding of Northumberland—Quinte West last week to visit three schools. Thank you for your interest.

My question today is to the Minister of the Environment. There's no question our climate is changing, and we all have a responsibility to act, as a government and as individuals, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I know that our government is committed to reducing greenhouse gases and setting aggressive reduction targets of 6% below 1990 levels by 2014 and 15% below 1990 levels by 2020. If Ontario is to meet these goals, then everyone must participate. We know that to reach these targets there are significant actions that our government must take, like our plan to close down coal. In my riding, in the community of Cobourg, there were some funding initiatives by your ministry to help that happen. Minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, the member is quite right. The community go green fund finances projects that inform, teach and motivate people to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to fight climate change. I hope we're all in favour of fighting climate change in this House.

On Friday, we had the pleasure of announcing that 34 community groups across Ontario will receive a total of \$2.15 million in provincial funding. This is for projects that by activity, scope and audience will encourage lifestyle changes that are better for our environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So in Cobourg, a fund of \$84,000 over two years went to Citizens for a Sustainable Cobourg. It basically will provide a central information clearing house for programs, incentives and tips about energy efficiency, alternative technology and waste reduction. That will help Cobourg meet its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by some 23,000 tonnes over the next few years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I know that creating the Cobourg Go Green Centre will provide valuable information to

those in my community who are looking for a way to reduce their environmental footprint.

While today marks the beginning of Earth Week, Ontarians are no longer waiting for a single day, week or month to consider their impact on our earth and take action; they are looking for ways to reduce their footprint every day of the year. They know that we only have one planet and we have to change our habits and the way we live to protect our homes. It is often local community-level programs, like those recognized by the community go green fund, that are among the best ways to mobilize Ontarians.

Could the minister tell this House about the community-based projects helping Ontarians to do their part that are supported by the community go green fund? For those who are interested in the fund, will there be another chance to make an application?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As I mentioned before, 34 community groups have received funding. Amongst them, for example, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has received \$40,000 for a two-year program called Green on Top at Waterdown, where high school students will design and build renewable energy projects at their school.

Also, in Dufferin-Caledon, the Caledon Countryside Alliance received almost \$15,000 for Take a Bite out of Climate Change. It's a program to rebuild the local food and farming system in Caledon and link local food and farming with greenhouse gas emissions.

In Parkdale-High Park, the Greenest City environmental organization received \$58,000 over two years for From the Ground Up. It's an innovative project that offers the people of Toronto's Parkdale district the capacity, support and space needed to grow local food. The next round of funding will come out in the fall of this year.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, it is clear from the recent Fraser Institute report that your approach to teaching our kids is flawed. Your plan is not working; in fact, I wonder if there really is a plan. I suspect that there is a patchwork quilt of policies that do not form a cohesive, functional plan for the benefit of all the students of this province—and I emphasize all the students.

Peter Cowley of the Fraser Institute says, "There's not another major district in the province that performed more poorly than the Toronto District School Board.... It's quite unusual that the ... metropolitan area in the province is doing so poorly."

Torontonians don't want to just get by. We want to compete and we want all of our students to succeed. The Premier stated in the House this morning that we need to be competitive. What are you doing to make sure that Toronto—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we're doing investing in is every student in this province, whether that's an elementary student, whether that's a secondary student, to give them the resources they need. That's why 77% of kids in Ontario are graduating from high school, up from 68% when we came into office.

We do have a plan. Our student success strategy puts programs into our high schools. Our literacy and numeracy strategy puts resources into elementary schools, helps teachers change their practice. We've lowered class sizes in those early years. All of those things have led to those successes later on.

The other issue is that the Fraser Institute is not one of the resources and not one of the reference groups that we go to to get information. What we do is, we look at what's going on in our schools, we put the resources where they are needed and then we see the success of our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: We can't pick and choose which statistics we want to read. I find it ironic that one minute you're rating your own schools and displaying them on a website, and the next minute you suddenly don't put a stick in school ratings.

It is interesting that schools in low-income neighbourhoods were doing really, really well, but what that says to me is that you are letting students who are just scraping by, who don't fall into that category—they continue to just scrape by.

Minister, what actions will you be taking to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to succeed in Toronto and Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: One of the reasons that we wanted to put the school information finder on our website was exactly what the member opposite is highlighting: that simplistic, overly simple view of organizations like the Fraser Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute, which take a group of schools and rank them. If you take any number of schools and rank them within a narrow band of achievement, there's going to be the top and there's going to be the bottom. What we wanted to do with the school information finder was to contextualize that information, to give families and the community more information so that they can assess what's happening.

The reality is, we're closing the gap between kids who are achieving and kids who aren't. We've put resources where they're needed so that kids who were having issues, kids who were struggling, are now achieving more. I would think that the member opposite would celebrate the fact that kids who were struggling are doing much better. That's cause for celebration. That's why—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. Peter Kormos: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. TICO knew half a year ago about

Conquest Vacations's cash flow problems. Its working capital had fallen below prescribed levels. Why didn't this minister warn the people of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this. First of all, I want to thank the member for asking this question. We are very fortunate in this province that we have a travel compensation fund for consumers, and TICO has worked aggressively to actually update consumers and provide them with all the support they can provide.

1120

Let me just outline some of the things they have done. TICO worked immediately to guarantee the return travel of all of the approximately 2,600 customers in destinations. They had about nine planes standing to bring all Ontarians back to Ontario. They have worked with the hotels—27 hotels—to guarantee that the customers are not overcharged. Not only that, they have provided the information on their website. They're also working with the travellers who still have not taken their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Horse feathers. I had hoped that by giving this minister written notice of my question, it might improve the quality of the response. I can tell you it doesn't work.

Look, TICO knew. TICO is the regulatory agency that's designed to protect consumers. It knew that Conquest Vacations was failing to meet TICO's standards. That means travellers were at risk.

Regardless of what the minister wants to say today, thousands of tourists, kids, honeymooners, have been left stranded, have been extorted for thousands of dollars by Mexican hoteliers and have had the Mexican police bullying them. This government failed to protect those Ontario travellers. Providing compensation after the fact doesn't change the reality for those people stranded in resorts in Mexico.

Why didn't this government warn the people of Ontario that they were at risk if they were purchasing from Conquest? How can the public ever trust them again? How can the public ever trust any travel agency—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me tell you, what is really important right now is to work with the consumers who have faced some inconvenience because Conquest Vacations Inc., after 37 years of operations, decided to voluntarily terminate their operations in Ontario.

TICO has worked very closely with them to bring all the vacationers back to Ontario. They have worked with the hotels. They also previously worked very closely with Conquest Vacations Inc. to make sure that their operations were in order, and they had given them notice to terminate their wholesale contracts if their performance hadn't improved. So they have done everything they could possibly do.

These are ongoing operations. It doesn't matter when you terminate these operations; you're still going to face the same kinds of issues that you're facing today.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Mike Colle: A question to the minister responsible for seniors: Minister, "elder abuse" is a phrase that is being heard too often these days. Ontario's seniors population is growing rapidly, and as they age, they're more susceptible to abuse. Many experts report that elder abuse is under-reported because seniors are afraid and ashamed to come forward. Seniors are also afraid to report abuse because they don't want to reveal the identity of their abusers for fear of reprisal. I ask the minister, what program have you put in place to help protect these seniors, day or night, wherever they live in Ontario, from elder abuse?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: The dignity and safety of our seniors is something for which we all bear responsibility. Elder abuse, whether it's physical, emotional or financial, cannot be tolerated.

Last week, I was delighted to be in my colleague's riding here in Toronto to launch a province-wide seniors' safety helpline to assist seniors at risk of abuse. This helpline will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and it's accessible in 154 languages. That's who we are in this province: a people who speak 154 languages. By making this helpline accessible to seniors at risk in their languages, I think we have moved the bar considerably.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: Our hard-working seniors will be very heartened to hear that they'll be able to communicate their concerns in the language of their choice, because many of them do not have English as their first language.

The creation of a province-wide seniors' safety helpline is an important step, but it's also important that the government has coordinated a plan to fight elder abuse in all its forms. I hope that in this Legislature we would agree that our seniors must be protected from this shameful abuse. Can the minister tell this House what action plan it has in place to prevent elder abuse in Ontario beyond the hotline?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: The McGuinty government has supported a number of initiatives to help our seniors live safely. Since the strategy was created, the government has invested over \$6 million in combating elder abuse, and over the last three years, the McGuinty government has provided more than \$1 million in grants to local elder abuse prevention networks throughout Ontario. In that regard, Ontario is the leader throughout Canada in adapting and promoting this very innovative strategy.

I would just like to address the point that my colleague made in his opening question, and that is the issue of privacy, because elders in this province who are at risk or suffering abuse often don't come forward for fear of their name and reputation being known. Protecting privacy, as well as making it available in many languages, was key to the success of this program, and that has been in-

corporated in it. It's obviously well received. We had a tremendous press turnout. It's an—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Premier, and it's with regard to northern Ontario. Premier, last year the federal government provided Ontario with \$358 million from the community development trust fund intended to help one-industry towns, like most of those in northern Ontario, that are currently suffering. Can you tell me where this money went?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I say to the member that we have been working, certainly, with the industry minister right now with respect to the coordination of the provincial funding and the federal funding. The member will know that, with respect to infrastructure funding, there has been an unprecedented investment over the last five years under this government.

I say to the member, I'm not sure exactly which projects he's referring to. I'm happy to work with the member to ensure that they are pursued on a timely basis. But I would say that we're talking about a situation where the funding, in fact, has been implemented and executed in this province much faster than it has been on the federal level.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. One of the federal government's conditions of the program was to encourage the province to report directly to constituents on the expenditures and outcomes achieved with the funding provided from the community development trust fund. The Premier said he would consult on the best ways to apply and leverage the new funding for maximum benefit for Ontario workers.

Northern Ontario mayors are calling me and they're asking, "Where's the money?" Nobody seems to see any benefit from it. They feel northern Ontario and the forestry sector are being neglected.

If that's not the case, then please tell the members of this Legislature which communities received money, how much did they get, and how much of the \$358 million is left.

Hon. Michael Bryant: In Red Lake, millions of dollars invested to do build the road, water, power and sewer infrastructure for a new industrial park; Chelmsford, \$2 million for a long-term-care home, 128 beds, 160 jobs created; Sioux Lookout, a \$1-million investment, 10 new jobs, retrofitting to retain space into a carpentry and electrical—Dryden, Sudbury, Rainy River, Red Rock, Timmins, Manitoulin Island, Sault Ste. Marie. This government has and will continue to make these investments in northern communities, and I really appreciate the member's question.

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Culture. Minister, Ontario's artists have been waiting a very long time for status of the artist legislation. The 2007 status of the artist act was a great disappointment, as you are well aware, and failed to improve the economic status of Ontario's artists. The arts community was told at the time that this legislation was just a first step; more would follow.

Can the minister explain what further steps have been taken to keep that promise to Ontario's artists?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: While the government did indeed pass the status of the artist legislation in the last mandate, the government has been very active and involved in the cultural sector and in supporting artists. This government values the important contributions of Ontario's 57,000 professional actors. The Ministry of Culture champions a number of things. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has increased funding to the Ontario Arts Council by \$15 million, and that is a 140% increase to the Ontario Arts Council. The budget that we are proposing has \$100 million annually in additional tax relief and \$30 million in investments to support entertainment and creative industries.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, it's always a bad indicator when you completely sidestep the question. As you know, Ontario's artists earn, on average, 37% less than the Ontario workforce in general. In the report of October 2006, the status of the artist subcommittee recommended, "That the Ministry of Culture establish a time-limited process where parties with a direct interest in any mandatory collective bargaining regime are invited to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Labour to work toward consensus." You've talked about funding. There was a promise made about status-of-the-artist legislation. There was a recommendation made about a process that you could put in place. Why haven't you done it and what are you waiting for?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'm not sidestepping the honourable member's question. Yes, the legislation was passed; yes, it is one of a number of initiatives. I, like many members here in the House, look forward to meeting again with the members of ACTRA during today's meeting session, but I think we also need to recognize that we have been delivering skills seminars to artists across Ontario in partnership with the Ministry of Small Business. We've been helping to train the next generation of digital media designers at the Ontario College of Art and Design, we've been helping to create a digital new media institute at the University of Waterloo, and since I came into this wonderful job I had the great opportunity to meet with the Canadian Film Centre people, approach my government and see this government under this Premier put \$2.5 million into enhancing that exceptional facility that indeed has much to do with continuing education and assistance to the artists. I think we might—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, as you know, hunting is an activity enjoyed by many Ontarians and many of my constituents. Moose in particular are icons of Ontario's ecosystem and contribute substantial social, economic and ecological benefits to the people of Ontario. They also hold significant value for aboriginal peoples. They are highly sought-after game animals, a means of subsistence and are very popular for viewing and important for tourism. This widespread value has resulted in moose being highly coveted by hunters and being one of Ontario's most intensively managed species.

I am aware that the ministry has been undertaking a review of Ontario's moose management and tag draw system. Can the minister share with the House what level of response has been received during public consultations and whether the input received will actually be implemented in the management policy?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to thank the member for his question, for indeed this is a very significant part of the economy in Ontario. We have approximately 100,000 moose and unfortunately we have about 100,000 hunters as well. We have over 54 wildlife units and unfortunately the moose are not similar in each unit.

What we did is we contacted over 500 hunters in over 20 locations right across Ontario, and we've received over 1,600 responses. This is going to be in two phases to ensure that we'll manage to have sufficient tags and to listen to what the hunters have to say as we put the policy in place. The policy has been in place for a number of years and it needed revision, and we also need to ensure that we have a sustainable moose population. There have been some challenges with regard to the moose population, especially in northwestern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: The minister mentions the review of the tag draw system. I know that this is of particular importance to many of my constituents, as I've received a number of complaints over my 20 years here from people who have been waiting years to receive a moose tag. Public consultation is a very important part of the review but I'm wondering how people have been made aware of these sessions and where they are being held so that they can in fact have the opportunity for input. Particularly in the north, there are many great distances between towns. Minister, can you tell us how many sessions are being conducted and explain how your ministry is making sure they are accessible to all Ontarians?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to say that there's a total of 27 communities and we've recently added two more at Kenora and Kapuskasing. We've had over 3,500 moose hunters who have attended these 25 different sessions, so we've issued local news releases; we've gone onto our website; we have multiple sessions within municipalities and local media; we give information about the time, the date and the location; and finally, we're also working with the associations. We

have NOSA in the north, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters across Ontario.

What we're trying to do is reach out and get as much information as possible. They said that there hasn't been a review of the moose tag allocation for a number of years. As the member has indicated, there have been significant challenges, so what we're trying to do is to get it right. Given the time, over two years, we will in fact put out a new moose tag allocation that reflects the input that we receive from the hunters across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN CORPS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I rise in the Legislature today to ask all to join me in celebrating the Canadian Corps Association's 75th anniversary of service to veterans and their families.

In 1934, a reunion of World War I veterans was held in Toronto, where it was decided to perpetuate the spirit of the Canadian Corps' front-line soldiers, and they formed an organization dedicated to promote the welfare of veterans and their dependents. They called the newly formed organization the Canadian Corps Association.

Over the years, the tasks of the Canadian Corps have been many and varied. They include the work obtaining assistance for veterans who, through circumstances attributed to their service during World War I, found themselves in need of hospitalization, pensions and so forth. After World War II, their activities were greatly increased, assisting in recruiting as well as advocating for adequate re-establishment benefits and preparing the World War II veterans for rehabilitation back into civilian life.

The 75th anniversary of Canadian Corps Association convention, from April 24 to 26, will be hosted by Unit 42 in Memorial Park in my riding of Oshawa. The convention will include a statue unveiling and a memorial service. The theme is, "Serving veterans and their dependents since 1934."

I'd like to thank all the wonderful members of this organization for the countless hours they have dedicated to supporting our veterans. The inscription on the statue says it best:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

BRAMPTON SPELLING BEE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise today to congratulate the children who participated last Saturday in the Brampton

spelling bee, which was held at Shoppers World Brampton. This annual event promotes education and self-confidence in these young people. I had the privilege in the past year of seeing these people get up in front of hundreds of people and spell difficult and complex words.

This spelling bee is more than just a competition. This event encourages children of all ages to thrive and learn words. This is not done by just memorizing a dictionary. This is accomplished by reading, writing, researching and asking questions. I strongly support a cause that makes education a priority. These children spend months studying for this occasion. They deserve recognition and encouragement from all of us.

This event could not be held without the many volunteers who give their time to make sure that these children have a platform to express their knowledge. I wish to acknowledge everyone who worked so hard to make sure this event was so successful. I look forward to attending next year's event.

PEMBROKE LUMBER KINGS

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Pembroke Lumber Kings are champions once again. Last Thursday evening, the Lumber Kings defeated the Nepean Raiders in a 3-2 overtime thriller. The win earned Pembroke its third straight central junior title and a trip to the Fred Page Cup in Moncton, New Brunswick, where they will compete for a shot at the national championship.

The game was highlighted by the stellar performance of Kings' goaltender Eric Levine. Levine, the league's best this season, stood on his head in a remarkable 54 save effort, 14 of them in overtime, before Damian Cross's goal clinched it for the home team.

The Central Junior Hockey League could not have a better representative than our Pembroke Lumber Kings. We have the best fans anywhere. No other team draws crowds like the Lumber Kings. The people love their team and that support is a big part of their success.

The Kings are a first-class organization that has always shown its pride and gratitude to the good folks of hockey town.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the city of Pembroke, coach and manager Sheldon Keefe, the players and every member of the team's organization for bringing the Bogart Cup to Pembroke once again.

Let me also wish them the very best at the Fred Page Cup. The city, indeed the entire valley, is behind them. Go, Kings, go.

WESTON COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very proud to speak today about a group of students from a high school in my riding who made the front page of the Toronto Star but, through their ambition, want to make it all the way to the White House.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The White House?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Yes, the White House, Maria.

A group of 17 remarkable young individuals got together and, under the guidance of their English teacher, created a sensational music video celebrating the historic occasion of Barack Obama's election as the US's first African-American president. The inspirational footage has registered thousands of views on YouTube and has gotten a lot of positive feedback from people in my community, bringing some to tears.

The video, titled "W2W," for "Weston to the White House," is as much a reflection of the hope that President Obama has instilled across the world as it is an indication of how the collective initiative of a few can reach the households of many, showing that youth have an active role to play in matters political. The footage also conveys a sense of community involvement that challenged neighbourhoods need more than ever.

I would like to congratulate the class for their achievement and for the message of optimism they have expressed through their work. In this vein, I would encourage other young girls and boys to showcase their creative faculties to their communities.

I would like to invite all members of this Legislature to view the video from the Weston Collegiate students by logging on to www.pricework.weebly.com.

RED BARN THEATRE

Mrs. Julia Munro: On Saturday night, the town of Georgina lost its most cherished cultural centre. The Red Barn Theatre, after 59 years of performances, burned to the ground.

As Canada's longest-running summer theatre, the Red Barn has been a venue for many of Canada's greatest actors, producers and directors.

The Lake Simcoe Arts Foundation operates the theatre, which sits on land owned by the Sibbald family, the owners of The Briars resort. It is local volunteers who do the fundraising, maintain the theatre and grounds, and do so many other tasks.

Despite the fire, the theatre company is determined to go on. It is committed to doing its best, as their board president, Bob Smith, said, "to put on all or at least the majority" of their 60th annual season.

Ideas are already coming forward to keep the theatre alive, and I share the hope that it will continue. I have attended performances at the Red Barn Theatre every year for the past 36 years, and I can certainly attest to the quality of its productions.

I urge the government to provide whatever assistance it can to rebuild this cultural jewel.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: Another week in Ontario, with more and more forest sector jobs at risk, more and more forest sector jobs disappearing, communities watching the base of their economy being crimped. What

is the response of the McGuinty Liberals? There is no response.

AbitibiBowater forced to file for financial restructuring: The government of Quebec immediately steps up and says that they're prepared to guarantee loans of \$100 million to help with that restructuring, to sustain jobs in that province.

What are we seeing from the McGuinty government? The McGuinty government has announced and re-announced its forest sector investment plan, but after four years there is still \$92 million that was announced that has never been disbursed, never been used. Meanwhile, literally 4,000 jobs are at risk. When is the McGuinty government going to respond?

Another example: Recently, the most modern paper mill in Ontario, in Dryden, which had over \$2.5 billion of new investment in the last 15 years, closed. It produced office paper like this. Where will the office paper be produced now? In North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Wisconsin, but not in Ontario.

1310

CITY OF CORNWALL

Mr. Jim Brownell: My riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has always been a hotbed of creative talent, ranging from authors like Maggie Wheeler to actors like Ryan Gosling. Among these talented artists are two up-and-coming filmmakers, John Earle and Frank Burrelle. Under their company, FishRizzo productions, John and Frank have already brought us two outstanding films: *Submerged* and *Treasures of the Lost Villages*. They are now set to bring us their third film, 86400; 86400 refers to the number of seconds in a 24-hour period. With this film, John and Frank and their colleague Ron Piquette spent 24 hours continuously filming the city of Cornwall, speaking to its citizens from all walks of life, trying to capture the pulse of the city. They even spent time at my constituency office in Cornwall.

Cornwall has endured its share of hardships in the past but has been blessed with some great moments as well. This June, for example, the community will celebrate the 225th anniversary of its founding. The ability to endure, to find the positives and build on them, is a hallmark of the city of Cornwall and a tribute to its people. 86400 will be premiering at 7 p.m. on April 29 at the Galaxy cinema in Cornwall, and I would encourage anyone interested in learning about the film to visit www.86400themovie.com. I look forward to this film, as I so enjoyed *Submerged* and *Treasures from the Lost Villages*.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House to announce the strides my city of London is making to better their community.

Just recently, I joined Minister Bentley for his annual Think Global Act Local event at White Oaks Mall. It's a

simple idea geared towards changing the environment. The idea was to make green energy products, services and education available to everyone. It was a market geared towards everyday citizens who are concerned about their impact on the environment, and the event provided all necessary means for them to help make a difference.

The event was successful. Several thousand people actively engaged in it, and the key speakers expressed their gratitude to us as representatives of the government. We were pleased to see many people learning about different ways to make their community greener. Mr. Bentley's Greenfoot Award was given to several community leaders who were recognized for "taking charge" by making a great difference in the community.

I would like to extend my thanks to Minister Bentley's office, especially to Ashley Conyngham, for organizing such a successful event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to do that.

CHANTAL BERTRAND

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: It is with much appreciation and thanks that I rise to congratulate Chantal Bertrand, a teacher and campus coordinator at le Centre d'éducation et de formation de l'Est ontarien in Hawkesbury.

Chantal is a recipient of the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence, for excellence in leadership. She is committed to helping everyone learn in English and French from age 16 to 60. She champions a vision of excellence and helps create a family atmosphere that makes everyone feel welcome and respected. She ensures that programs and courses meet high standards, programs that have since been adopted by other schools. Throughout her career, she has worked to build community partnerships and collaborated on the introduction of courses that meet students' needs, such as welding for women and computing for adults 55 and over.

Chantal and all 20 recipients of the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence will be recognized at a special event during Education Week.

Félicitations à Chantal. Au nom des étudiants et étudiantes du Centre d'éducation et de formation de l'Est ontarien à Hawkesbury, un grand merci.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les coroners.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mrs. Van Bommel assumes ballot item number 12 and Mr. Qaadri assumes ballot item number 74.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT (VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL (VIOLENCE ET HARCÈLEMENT AU TRAVAIL)

Mr. Fonseca moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 168, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters / Projet de loi 168, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en ce qui concerne la violence et le harcèlement au travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd ask that I make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Just before I begin, I would like to welcome the following individuals who have travelled to Queen's Park today to witness the introduction of the bill. These individuals are as follows: the Lori Dupont family—Barbara Dupont, Christine Dupont and Brad Dupont; the Theresa Vince family—Jim Vince, Catherine Kedziora, Kim Kedziora; and Michelle Schryer. I thank them, and I also thank the ministry staff who have worked so hard on this legislation—Alison Smyth, Brian Hanulik, Yvette Shirliff, Kathleen Therriault and

Maxime Cappeliez—who are also with us in the members' gallery.

I rise today to ask my colleagues to stand with me in taking action against violence and harassment in the workplace. The bill I'm introducing today would, if passed, clarify for employers and employees their responsibilities and rights to prevent and respond to workplace violence and harassment.

Under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act, all employers are required to take every reasonable precaution to protect the health and safety of their workers in the workplace—including violence. After consulting with employers, labour, and women's groups, we recognized that the protections and responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act could be clarified so workers and employers know what is expected.

Today, I am proud to introduce amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, amendments that would help strengthen and provide clarification to the existing act. The proposed amendments, if passed, would require:

- employers to prepare a workplace harassment policy and develop and maintain a program to implement that policy;

- the addition of a definition of "workplace violence" to the act itself;

- employers to understand their responsibilities, and workers their rights, in preventing workplace violence;

- a provision for workers so that they may remove themselves from harmful situations if they have reason to believe that they are at risk of imminent danger due to violence in the workplace; and

- require employers to take reasonable precautions to protect an employee from domestic violence in the workplace.

Our obligation is to deal with workplace violence, not just from another worker, but from anyone who enters the workplace.

The act, as it is now, does provide that employers have a general duty to keep their workplaces safe. These proposed amendments, however, will help strengthen existing provisions under the act and provide clarification to current regulations. We want workplaces to create an environment that says to each and every worker, "Violence is unacceptable in this workplace, and violence will be dealt with."

The proposed amendments would be performance-based, providing clear direction about what is required while allowing employers the flexibility to develop policies and programs that meet the needs and risk levels of their workplaces. Preventing injuries and absences translates into higher worker morale, increased productivity, reduced lost-time injuries and reduced workplace insurance premium costs. The government will continue to work with our health and safety partners to create easy-to-follow guidelines, checklists and templates to help employers comply with the proposed amendments.

I ask the members of this Legislature to stand with me in passing these amendments and to stand with me against workplace violence.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Robert Bailey: On behalf of the official opposition, it is my pleasure to rise and offer some comments on this bill today.

First off, I would like to say that it's about time. Our colleague the member from Durham has been pushing this government for months to act on the recommendations put forward from the Lori Dupont inquiry. Lori Dupont was a nurse who was murdered in 2005 by a fellow employee who worked at the same hospital. Eventually, the government did call an inquest into this tragedy, and the inquest reported in 2007. That was 2007; it is now April 2009.

To the point of this bill, we notice that there is nothing in the amendments that outlines punishments. The bill requires employers to develop policies with respect to workplace violence and to develop and maintain programs to implement them. Employers will have to assess the risk of workplace violence, and it will require employers who are aware that violence may occur in the workplace to take every precaution to protect a worker who is at risk of injury. It will also specify existing duties on employers and supervisors to provide that information and advise workers and to include professional information about a risk of workplace violence from a person.

This will be welcomed by teachers and education assistants, who will now have to be told if a student has a history of violence. Workers will now also have the right to refuse work if that worker has reason to believe that workplace violence is likely to endanger him or her.

We on this side of the House would have liked to have seen clearly-laid-out penalties for not living up to this act, and that seems to be missing. It seems like this is a process that may or may not protect anyone, and that is shameful.

I would also like to say that on this side of the House, we feel that violence is unacceptable in any workplace and that violence should be dealt with. I hope that when we study the amendments, the proposed amendments will provide clear direction about what is required while allowing those employers the flexibility to develop policies and programs that meet the needs and risk levels of those workplaces.

Under the guise of making people safer, the government is also proposing regulatory changes that will allow them to pass regulations contained in any policy required under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These will be done behind closed doors with no public input. Our party will have a real problem with that.

But we will be looking for changes once this bill gets to the committee. I commend the minister on his announcement today and look forward to working with him and the government to make this a better bill.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to first of all acknowledge the people who have come today, the families of victims of the worst kind of workplace violence that we've seen in the province of Ontario. It's great that they

are here. It's probably a very painful time for them but certainly a time when they would like to see some positive changes occur in terms of the situation of workplace violence and harassment in the province.

I have to say that I'm pretty disappointed with the minister's bill as it's before me today. The minister claims that this is a bill that's going to be the be-all and end-all in terms of ending violence and harassment in the workplace, and I don't believe that that is the case. I know that Ontario has never had legislation that was specifically related to violence and harassment in the workplace. However, this government had an opportunity to put in place the toughest, the most comprehensive legislation on workplace violence and harassment, and they have failed to do so in this bill.

Certainly it's a baby step, but in the province of Ontario, when people are being harassed at work, when people are being bullied at work, when we know that's happening day in and day out, when domestic violence spills into the workplace, when workplaces are poisoned because of the kinds of behaviours that are occurring there, we get this bill that is not, I submit, going to help many hundreds and thousands of workers in this province deal with that harassment and violence.

In the recommendations that have come forward by this minister—I think he needs to take a look at legislation that has been in this Legislature for many years now, legislation that was put together in consultation with Ontario nurses' unions, with public sector workers' unions and with private sector workers' unions; legislation that looks at the recommendations coming out of the inquests of Theresa Vince and Lori Dupont but that also looks at what happened with SARS and talks about the precautionary principle that needs to be put in place in workplaces in this province, so that we are anticipating the potential for violence, for harassment, for bullying; so that we are not waiting until workers have to deal with these incidents where their very lives are put at risk because we did not foresee circumstances brewing in the workplace that will likely end up creating a situation where someone is going to be hurt, either physically or mentally.

Unfortunately, the government has not taken the opportunity to put that strong, effective kind of legislation in place. Instead, they've got a piece of legislation here that sets out significant obligations to the employer around development of policies, and yet there is no requirement that the government ensure that not only are the policies up to snuff but that they are being implemented and followed up upon. In fact, it leaves employers with the responsibility to ensure that their internal processes are helping to address violence and harassment in the workplace. That is not good enough. That is not good enough and that is not what the workers of this province need. The workers of this province need strong legislation that is upheld by their government. That's what they need, and unfortunately, they are not getting that in this bill.

What they could get it in is in Bill 29, legislation that I brought forward several months ago—in fact, well over a

year ago. That includes strong powers of investigation for designated Ministry of Labour staff. It exercises the precautionary principle to the fullest. It covers all workers, but not only workers; any other person within the workplace is covered in Bill 29: suppliers, contractors and other personnel who might be entering the workplace. They are also responsible; they have to be held to account when it comes to harassment and bullying in the workplace. This legislation doesn't do nearly enough.

I just wanted to talk briefly about one of the specific recommendations in the Lori Dupont case—a couple of them. Recommendation 49: “It is recommended there be a review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to examine the feasibility of including domestic violence”—and I know the minister will say that it's in here. But it says, “Specifically, the review should consider whether safety from emotional or psychological harm, rather than merely physical harm, ought to be part of the mandate of the ministry. In this regard, the review should be directed to include an examination of the legislation and policies.”

I would submit that you had failed in that regard, Minister. It's a sad day in the province of Ontario when you didn't do everything that could have been done to end violence in the workplace.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax ... will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario” families.

I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Myriam.

1330

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition, and I want to thank the workers of the Canadian Union of Postal

Workers as well as the Ontario Public Service Employees Union for providing it for me.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas workplace harassment (physical/psychological) and violence are linked to the mental and physical ill-health and safety of workers in Ontario; and

“Whereas harassment and violence need to be defined as violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act so that it is dealt with as quickly and earnestly by employers as other health and safety issues; and

“Whereas employers will have a legal avenue and/or a legal obligation to deal with workplace harassment and violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment; and

“Whereas harassment poisons a workplace, taking many forms—verbal/physical abuse, sabotage, intimidation, bullying, sexism and racism, and should not be tolerated; and

“Whereas harassment in any form harms a target's physical and mental health, esteem and productivity, and contributes to trauma and stress on the job; and

“Whereas Bill 29 would make it the law to protect workers from workplace harassment by giving workers the right to refuse to work after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment and oblige employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to treat workplace harassment and violence as a serious health and safety issue by passing MPP Andrea Horwath's Bill 29, which would bring workplace harassment and violence under the scope of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.”

I agree with this petition and sign my name to it, sending it to the table with Nicola.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition that I received from a constituent of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, citoyens de la province de l'Ontario, méritons et avons le droit de demander des modifications à la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère, ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents, comme le prévoit le projet de loi 33, 2008, présenté par le député provincial Kim Craiton.

« Attendu que le paragraphe 20(2.1) de la Loi exige que les père et mère et autres personnes qui ont la garde d'enfants ne doivent pas faire déraisonnablement obstacle aux relations personnelles qui existent entre les enfants et leurs grands-parents;

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2) de la Loi énumère les questions dont le tribunal doit tenir compte pour établir l'intérêt véritable d'un enfant. Le projet de loi modifie ce paragraphe de façon à inclure une mention

expresse de l'importance du maintien des liens affectifs qui existent entre enfants et grands-parents;...

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adoptent le projet de loi 33, 2008, qui modifie la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents. »

J'y ajoute ma signature.

SALES TAX

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the auto industry in Ontario and throughout North America is experiencing a major restructuring; and

"Whereas the current economic crisis is affecting the auto manufacturers and the front-line dealerships throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas many potential automobile purchasers are having difficulty accessing credit even at current prices; and

"Whereas a three-month tax holiday of the GST and the PST on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks would stimulate auto sales;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the provincial and federal governments to implement a three-month tax holiday in order to support the auto sector."

I affix my name in full support.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is regarding property tax assessments.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are angry over the volatility of the MPAC tax assessment system, the near impossibility to predict one's assessment or to understand how it is arrived at, the patent unfairness of assessments and that the current system leaves many homeowners worried they may be forced to sell their homes; and

"Whereas changes are needed that will make Ontario's property tax system stable, understandable, fair and sensitive to homeowners; and

"Whereas property assessments in Parkdale-High Park have risen between 28% and 45% between 2005 and 2008;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Support the 'freeze till sale' plan to bring fairness to Ontario's property tax system so that new assessments happen only at the time of sale and when a building permit is obtained for renovations totalling more than \$40,000."

I couldn't agree more. I affix my signature, and I'm giving it to Lindsay to deliver.

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member

from Niagara Falls. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and comes through the Lupus Foundation of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

"Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

"Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

"We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario."

On behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, I'm pleased to sign this petition and ask Kenzie to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased to support my constituents.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: A petition on behalf of our vulnerable caregivers:

"Whereas a number of ... caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas ... "caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect ... " caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for ... caregivers; and

"Whereas a great number of ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support MPP Mike Colle's bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support the caregivers, and I support this petition. I affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I've received more petitions to do with the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre, and they read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk's Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

"Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

"Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk's Falls health centre;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk's Falls health centre."

I support this petition and give it to page Cooper.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: A petition from the students at the Yorkdale Adult Learning Centre.

"Whereas there are a growing number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities;

"Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are allowed to possess handguns;

"Whereas a growing number of illegal handguns are transported, smuggled and being found in cars driven in our communities;

"Whereas impounding cars and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing illegal guns on the spot by the police will make our communities safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, a bill ... entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so that we can reduce the number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities."

I support the students at Yorkdale, and I support the security guard who got shot last Thursday at Yorkdale.

1340

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased to sign it and give it to Michael to present at the table.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of constituents from my riding, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the table.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have a very important petition; I've had hundreds of them signed this weekend.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians in particular;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased once again to sign it, on behalf of my constituents, and give it to Cameron to present at the table.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relationships between children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, as above, to emphasize the importance of

children's relationships between their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR
LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 9, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I want to say at the outset to people who might be listening or who are in the galleries today that Bill 162 is a conglomeration or an omnibus bill of 31 different pieces of legislation.

Surprisingly enough, the bill—Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures—doesn't include some of the major thrusts and some of the major topics which people around Ontario are talking about in terms of the budget which was introduced by the finance minister in March. Bill 162 does not include the legislation dealing with the harmonization of the federal and provincial sales tax. Bill 162 does not deal with corporation tax relief, nor does it deal with individual tax relief in terms of their income taxes. So this bill, in large part, deals with a lot of housekeeping matters, but it also deals with a few very important matters which I will be alluding to as I go through my speech.

I would, at the outset, like to thank officials from the Ministry of Finance for briefing myself and members of the staff for the Progressive Conservative Party. I was overwhelmed by the number of people who showed up at the briefing. There were three of us on one side of the table and, without a bit of exaggeration, there were 40 on the other side of the table. That is, in part, due to the fact that there were 31 different acts amended here in this legislation, and each act required an official or two to explain what that particular act meant.

I've had the opportunity to review the remarks of some of the other members of the Legislature with regard to Bill 162 prior to making my remarks today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus. I noted that Mr. Prue from the New Democratic Party limited his debate and remarks to Bill 162. He talked about the Ontario Securities Commission. He also talked about the pension insurance fund, and he had some comments with regard to that. I did note that the three Liberal members who have talked on this bill—Mr. Arthurs, Mr. Mauro and Mr. Colle—talked little about Bill 162 but talked about general budgetary matters and how good the government was with regard to those matters. This points to the

observation that a bill like this can be glossed over and a lot of the content of the bill would never be brought to light and therefore not evoke the proper public debate with regard to some of the content in this particular act.

I did note from Mr. Prue's remarks that he said, and I agree with him, that much of the bill deals with very technical matters. When you get into taxation and when you get into insurance funds and those kinds of things, many questions pop into mind. It would be my hope, at the outset, that the government would see fit to sever two parts of the bill and let the other 29 stand and that we debate those particular matters.

The two matters which I would like severed out of the bill relate to the interim allocation of some \$46 billion more for the government to spend out of the consolidated revenue fund, as well as the matters dealing with the pension insurance fund, because I think the pension insurance fund requires a focused debate by people in Ontario and we should not just deal with one very small matter with regard to this very important topic and leave the rest to come to light sometime in the future.

I think this is a great opportunity for all members of the Legislature and the public to seriously consider true pension reform, not only dealing with the insurance but also dealing with fully funded pensions and how all of that occurs. The government, as members know, have in their possession a very important study which they commissioned and is now in their hands and was delivered to them in November of last year. They claim that they are studying it. What better opportunity would it be than to refer that particular report to something like a select committee of the Legislature where the members of the Legislature who are interested in this could in fact put forward the politics of reforming our pension reform system.

1350

I can remember a long time ago, in the late 1970s, we had a select committee on insurance. That committee sat together for four years of the parliamentary term and went through the insurance schemes that were there. We talked about it, and we came up with a unanimous report for reform. I think it's time that we looked at that as well.

I'm going to talk about a lot of the bill. I want to talk about eight different sections of the bill which deal with eight different acts. Some of the acts, I fully support the changes contained in them.

One of the problems we in the opposition have with a bill like this is, with 31 acts, there's probably one or two that we would oppose, and they're very, very important ones that we want to oppose as well. If these acts were read separately and were presented separately, we would support probably 28 or 29 of the 31 because they are basically housekeeping amendments, and there's really a need to keep the laws up to date with the changing environments that occur.

However there are two, maybe three, that we would oppose. There are some that we would like to make very, very minor amendments to in order to provide more accountability. But we've heard all too often in this

House that when we vote against Bill 162, we will have the finance minister stand up day after day and say, "You voted against this," "You voted against that," which is patently false. In fact our party, and I know the New Democratic Party as well, would support parts of those particular bills.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As well, I just heard one of the Liberal backbenchers say, "You were here when omnibus bills"—yes, and I was here when the Liberals in opposition stood up and said, "We don't want any omnibus bills." I don't mind an omnibus bill dealing with small, minor, technical amendments.

When I was the House leader, actually what I did with omnibus bills is I went to the opposition and said, "Do you object to any of the sections or the acts that are contained in this?" I took those sections out of the act in order to allow the omnibus bill to go through with very little debate. So I did it. I did it with consultation. You can ask your finance minister, who was then the Liberal House leader. That was the method that we went through. Of course, now there is a different attitude towards this place.

At any rate, I wanted to first talk about the Commodity Futures Act, which is schedule 6 of the bill. I'm commenting on this because my good friend Mr. Prue bought this to light in his speech that he brought forward. I do so because he asked about the fact that this particular change to the act gives the Ontario Securities Commission the right to make specific orders that last for 10 days, or they would last for 30 days if it had the approval of the Minister of Finance. He was concerned about that, asking about the particular dates.

I don't have any problem with that particular act or those particular powers given to the securities commissioner or the finance minister because I think there is a need, which has been proven in the latest financial breakdown of our securities system, for immediate action in certain circumstances. Fortunately, there is a time limit on those particular acts: 10 days in the case of the Ontario Securities Commission, and 30 days in the case of the Minister of Finance.

But the important point that Mr. Prue was making was—he had some questions about this: Who does he ask about this? How do we include that in the legislative debate? He called for, and I agree with him, some very serious committee hearings on the various different bills contained herein.

The first thing I want to say is that I support, we support, the changes to the Commodity Futures Act contained in this bill.

Next, I'd like to talk about the Financial Administration Act, which is included in schedule 12 of the bill. This particular amendment to the act allows the government to shove yet more immediate costs off into the future, to be amortized into the future. What we have seen from this government over the period of time that they have been in power is a huge increase in our long-term debt. They have taken the long-term debt from \$130

billion, and it is now projected to go over \$200 billion. They've been able to do that because they changed the accounting system in 2005, and therefore they were given basically carte blanche in dealing with the construction of schools and hospitals across our province. They've been able to shove that off as an expense on their balance sheet or on their profit-and-loss statement each year and put it into a long-term amortization, as we would with a mortgage.

My concern over this, once you give this government the right to spend future dollars for future governments by saying, "You don't have to pay for that hospital this year, but you can pay for it over 40 years," is that they continue to do this recklessly, creating more and more debt for our kids and our grandkids. That's what this government has got itself into. This particular section of the bill, schedule 12, on the Financial Administration Act, allows them to exacerbate that. I have some difficulty with that, and I wanted to bring to light the fact that once you give this present government carte blanche in terms of spending money, they will spend it. Our party has called for them, in the budget, to bring new accountability mechanisms to the Legislature to deal with their stimulus package. We brought forward a motion to say, "We need more accountability with regard to the stimulus package which you have outlined in your budget," which I believe is about \$32 billion over the next two years—money which they don't have; money which they are going to borrow. We want them to show us where the money is being spent, who got the contract, how many jobs it created and how many long-term jobs it created. We think that all of those kinds of matters should be part of the accountability mechanism in their stimulus package.

To date, we've only heard that what they're going to do is spend the money. They've created an excuse for them to spend \$32 billion more than they would have without additional accountability mechanisms. Oddly enough, there is a debate in the federal House of Commons over this very matter, dealing with Prime Minister Stephen Harper's budget. Oddly enough, the stimulus package which the Liberals threatened to close down the government on was a stimulus package of \$3 billion. They wanted more accountability mechanisms; the federal Liberals wanted more accountability mechanisms. All I say is, if you're dealing with \$32 billion in a stimulus package, as we are here, we should have 10 times more reasons to have additional accountability mechanisms to deal with this particular unusual thrust of spending. You couldn't give a worse bunch of incompetent managers the green light to go and spend \$32 billion than these people here. With regard to the Financial Administration Act and giving the government even more tools to spend more money, to not be immediately accountable to it I think is bad.

1400

The next particular act that I wanted to talk about was schedule 28, which I agree with. Schedule 28 is part of the Taxation Act. What this particular section of the act

deals with are children which are in the custody of children's aid societies across the province of the Ontario. This particular section gives these children the Ontario child benefit, to be paid to the children's aid society on behalf of the child. It will allow our children's aid societies to benefit kids that are under their direct care, in their own care, in their own premises, and it will also allow them to provide benefits to children, up to \$1,100 a year, in foster homes. I think it's a good section, which will allow these kids an additional opportunity to thrive and to perhaps have some benefits that all of the other children in the province might have.

The one part that was not answered when I went into the briefing with the finance ministry was the accountability for this. In other words, does little Johnny who is a foster child with the Smiths get \$1,100? Or is it up to the allocation of the children's aid society whether he receives \$1,100 or \$2,400 worth of benefits or \$30 worth of benefits? It was made clear to me that there are no accountability mechanisms to ensure that someone is watching over, that the money is fairly distributed amongst all of the children who are in that children's aid society's care. So I would ask for some amendments to introduce some kind of accountability mechanisms from the children's aid society to show how this money was being spent and that it wasn't being spent all on one child, that there was some fair distribution amongst all of the children. I don't think it has to be \$1,100 for each child, but I think there should be some measure of fairness between all of the children, as would be the case if they weren't in the care of the children's aid society; they would all be entitled to \$1,100, as determined by their parents.

I also want to indicate our support for changes to the Tobacco Tax Act in schedule 30. In schedule 30, there is a change which would restrict very much the possession of unmarked cigarettes. Under the current act, a person can have in his possession up to 200 unmarked cigarettes without contravening the act, as long as the person doesn't possess the cigarettes for purpose of sale. This particular act prohibits the possession of any number of unmarked cigarettes for any purpose unless authorized by the act.

I want to say that we know, particularly those members of the public accounts committee, of the serious problem that we have with contraband cigarettes being sold across the province. In fact, in the last Auditor General's report, which came out in early December of last year, the Auditor General estimated that we were losing over \$500 million a year in tobacco tax revenues. Not only is there a loss in a tremendous revenue source, but every illegal cigarette encourages young people to smoke. A carton of cigarettes sells for \$60 or \$70—I don't know what they sell for, but it's somewhere in that neighbourhood; the illegal cigarettes sell for \$12 or \$15. We all know, and I know, that the cheaper the cigarettes are, the more likely it is that young people will take up the habit. So we support that, but we also call on the government to start enforcing the laws that are already

there and cracking down on the people who are manufacturing, transporting, and selling unmarked cigarettes.

Our public accounts committee has brought forward a report on this illegal sale of cigarettes, and there are some very practical recommendations in there to address this problem.

One of the major problems we have is the problem of jurisdiction. If an RCMP officer stops a truck on the 401, they can lay charges under federal laws. They can actually take away the truck and the contraband in it. However, if an OPP officer stops a truck on the 401, they can't do anything save and except hold the car in place until they get permission from the Ministry of Revenue to take control of the cigarettes. They can't take the truck away from the particular individual. The committee was astounded to find that an OPP officer can't impound the illegal cigarettes without the permission of a member of the special investigations branch of the Ministry of Revenue. The problem is, the OPP don't find these people between 8 and 5, Monday to Friday. They find these people at 3 o'clock in the morning on the 401, and it's very hard to find a special investigations officer at that time, being that they are all located in Oshawa and a lot of these trucks are found around Cornwall and the 401. For God's sake, it requires a little bit of brainpower to start delegating power to change the legislation in that part and allow the OPP to impound the cigarettes immediately. What's happening now is, when the OPP officers stop this, they get another call and they have to go to the other call, so they let the guy go. It's all done. So those unmarked cigarettes get sold, the person doesn't get charged, and the problem is not faced.

So we support the stiffening of this particular aspect of the Tobacco Tax Act, but we do need some significant changes in other parts to really make the enforcement work.

I just want to talk about schedule 16—it deals with the Legislative Assembly Act—which says that MPPs' salaries should be frozen this year. I agree with that, and I believe my party will agree with me on that as well. However, I do believe that there are a lot of people in this province who are paid through the taxpayer who earn significantly more than members of this Legislature. I also believe that there should be some obligation on their part to hold their salaries where they are in this very, very difficult time.

1410

The other matter that we would agree with—because it was raised by Mrs. Witmer—with regard to this act is schedule 13 of the act, which deals with the ability of the government in terms of how they advertise and try to promote various ministers in various parts of this province. This particular section of the act was, I imagine, a direct response to a question raised in this Legislature by Mrs. Witmer about the Deputy Premier's profile showing on bus shelters across greater Toronto and who was paying for that particular advertising. This indicates that that kind of advertising will not go on in the future—and paid by ministries.

Now I want to talk about the two more serious parts of the legislation. I have indicated support by my party for a number of sections, and many of the other sections that I haven't commented on would be supported by my party.

However, this bill sort of slipped in there—under schedule 27 of the bill is the interim allocations act. That act gives permission to the government to spend another \$47.5 billion out of the consolidated revenue fund. For those at home and those who might not understand how the Legislature works, as part of the accountability mechanisms in the Legislature of Ontario, for the government to write a cheque, they need a bill passed in this House. I asked a question of the Ministry of Finance staff: "Why do you need this now? This is the start of our budgetary year." It's now April 20, and they're asking for the right to spend \$47.5 billion, when last October they obtained from us in this Legislature the right to spend some \$56.5 billion. So they've already got \$56.5 billion—the right to write those cheques. You'd think that that would do them for the first half-year. I would have thought that they wouldn't have brought in another—it used to be called a supply motion; now it's an interim allocation motion. I would have thought they would have waited until September, when we were halfway through our budget year, to come back in. This will give them, after this bill passes—and I understand that we may be in a time allocation on this bill—the right to spend a total of \$104 billion. They'll have that right if they move time allocation. God knows whether they'll give us any committee hearings to deal with some of the controversial parts of the bill, which I'm going to talk about next. So, \$104 billion of the \$108 billion that they're planning to spend—they'll have the right to spend it before May 1. In fact, they may have that right—and I suspect that's why they're hurrying the passage of this bill along—before they deliver the estimates to the House. We don't have the estimates. Under our process, what has to happen is the government must present to the Legislature the line-by-line estimates of how each ministry is going to spend money. That has to be done by this Thursday. Now here we've had most of the debate on this bill and the allocation of all of the money to spend for this whole fiscal year before we've actually seen the estimates of the various ministries. So we have rough figures in the budget. The Ministry of Health is going to spend—I haven't got the number right here in front of me—\$35 billion or \$40 billion, but that's all we know. We don't know how much is going to be spent here, there and everywhere, and all the rest of it.

One of the things we do not know is what they might allocate in the estimates dealing with the pension insurance fund, which is another part of this bill.

So we have this kind of weird scenario going on here, and the ministry officials were very apologetic to me when I said, "How come you're asking for your second interim allocation bill so early in the process?" They're just \$4 billion short of what they say they're going to spend in the budget. They might have enough with this particular interim allocation to run them right through to

March 31, 2010. I'm a little weary about that—leery about that. I'm weary too, but leery. I'm very much concerned about this interim allocation bill being brought forward so early in the session.

The other and major part of this bill that draws our attention is with regard to the pension benefits guarantee fund. This particular fund was considered by the committee I talked about a few moments ago. It was reviewed by the pension group that the minister had asked, the Expert Commission on Pensions. They issued their report in November: *A Fine Balance: Safe Pensions, Affordable Plans, Fair Rules*.

The pension benefits guarantee fund doesn't apply to all Ontarians. It applies to maybe 30%. It applies to people who are lucky enough to have a defined benefit pension plan. This means that if you work with the Ontario government for 30 years, you get, I think, 2% a year of the average of your best five years. You're guaranteed that for life, and your spouse is guaranteed a certain amount—I think it's 60% of that amount—if she or he survives the spouse. Seventy per cent of people do not have a defined benefit pension.

One of the dichotomies of this debate is this: If the province is going to provide insurance for people who have defined benefit pensions, in the past what has happened is that if there was a shortfall in that fund, the province loaned money to the pension fund. In fact, on March 31, 2004, this government did lend this particular pension insurance fund \$330 million at zero per cent interest. They gave them \$330 million for 30 years at no interest. Some might argue that that's a heck of a benefit for a pension insurance fund to get, especially when it applies to only 30%—probably the most lucky 30%—of our population having a defined benefit pension plan. In giving this generous loan, this government has already said to this very select group of citizens of Ontario, "We're going to spend general taxpayers' money in order to help a person who has a defined benefit pension plan." I'd say to the other 70%, "That ain't exactly fair."

1420

What this bill does is it says the next time there may be a shortfall here, they don't just lend the money at zero percent interest; the finance minister has the right unilaterally to hand them a cheque, and the rest of the taxpayers pony up. All those people who do not have a pension plan, all those people who don't have a defined pension plan, pony up for the people who are the best off. I think we should have a debate about that. That's why I would like this particular section taken out of this bill and dealt with in a reasonable and logical fashion as to who should be ponying up to support this particular insurance fund.

I asked the ministry officials, "Does everybody who has a defined pension plan pay in? Does their employer pay in?" Because this isn't paid by the employees; this is paid by the employers. "Does everybody pay in?" Well, no, everybody doesn't pay in. In fact, there are more exemptions than there are people who do pay in.

Interestingly enough, of course, anybody who is employed by the public service—all of OPSEU, all of the

provincial employees, all of the teachers, all of the municipal employees—they're all exempted, their employers are all exempted, from paying any premiums into this fund. Well, is it any wonder that if you exempt probably 70% or whatever of the people who have the defined benefits, it is weak in its structure?

So I think we should have a debate. We should have a debate as to who pays in. If we're going to insure, as a government under the people of the Ontario, some people who have a defined benefit plan up to \$1,000 a month, why should people have a guarantee that their pension is going to be paid 100%—not \$1,000 a month. If you worked for the government or you taught in this province or you worked for any municipality, there is no way—no way—you are not going to get everything that has been promised to you.

Is there any requirement on the government or the municipality or the teachers' employers, the boards, to pay into this particular fund? No, even though they have a 100% guarantee. Yet the guys out there on the line at GM or Chrysler or involved in this particular scheme, their employers have to pay in—mostly have to pay in. It's kind of an odd situation with GM, but that's another story altogether.

I'm not sure what the answer is, nor was the special pension committee that was set up and who reported. They basically have said, and there's been a lot of discussion, "It's a mess. It worked for a while, but it doesn't work anymore. It's really broken."

What the minister is asking for here is a carte blanche. He's asking for the right—not even the cabinet has to approve—to write a cheque. He can write a cheque if they run out of money. He doesn't have to loan the money; he can write a cheque. To cover that cheque, all taxpayers in Ontario are going to have to come to the table. I don't think that's right without a discussion. I think we should have a political discussion about that. Who should be compensating for that payment?

Those are basically my concerns over that particular act. I know my friend Mr. Prue from the New Democratic Party, their critic, has indicated that he wants to have significant public hearings on that particular section of the bill too. I think we have to talk about the protections of people who relied on this fund and how best to achieve fairness and equity with regard to their hopes and aspirations, because a lot of them have counted on this money and we can't leave them out in the cold, but we also have to consider who's benefiting and who's going to pay—who should pay and who should benefit. We have to talk about those issues and whether or not we can sustain this kind of matter in the future.

I think we should have a debate about whether we should have any defined benefit pension plans in the province. Maybe you don't have them; you just have defined contribution plans. I know my friend over here says, "Oh, yeah." Well, if you don't properly insure it, then you've got to deal with those issues. That's what I want to do here.

With regard to whether I've heard from any constituents or from my colleagues etc., and looking at the news

clippings with regard to this bill, the only issue that has been raised has been on the pension insurance fund issue, and I suspect that that will go forward. What I have been receiving, and what all the other members have been receiving, is tremendous reaction to the PST/GST combination coming together. I have never seen such a negative reaction to this. The big problem that I find with that tax is that it's going to hit the little guy, the seniors, disproportionately, when you have to pay it on your heating oil, when you have to pay it on your electrical bill and on all of the things where these people don't have an income that is expanding. They have a fixed income, often relatively small, especially as they get older and inflation attacks what they were entitled to in the beginning.

At any rate, I think that all of these issues—the issues raised by our failing economy, the issues partially raised in this bill with regard to insurance funds for benefits. Talking about defined benefit plans, quite frankly, I feel if we are going to have defined benefit plans, every citizen in Ontario should be entitled to get one. I am fine with that, as long as everybody else understands how it's going to happen: who pays in, how it's paid in and all the rest of it.

People scoff at the United States of America and they talk about how hard they are on the people. Well, I tell you, they've got better pension schemes run by the state than we do.

Mr. Mike Colle: We have no pension.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You have a defined contribution pension, and you voted for it. You voted for it, Mike. I was here with you.

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Madam Speaker, there's some background noise.

I guess what it comes down to is, we need a full debate, and that's why I, at the outset, called for the fact that we should have a select committee on pensions to deal with the report of November of last year. We should have a select committee on pensions to talk about what is in the realm of possibility. It's easy to say that everybody should have a certain amount of money, but somebody's got to pony up in order for that to happen.

1430

I do believe that the average citizen who doesn't want to invest in the market, who doesn't have time to invest in the market, should have some of the advantage that people have who are working for the public service. This may sound strange from a Conservative, but I think that there should be an option for a small businessman to say, "I don't have time to take care of that, and I'm willing to pay in X amount of dollars a month in order to ensure that I'm going to have a nest egg to retire on, come hell or high water. It may not pay nearly as much as it would if I invest in a stock market that's skyrocketing, but I'm going to do that." I think we should give that opportunity to everybody in the province of Ontario, and I think we should talk about those things and consider those things.

This is a patchwork that is being applied by the finance minister. He's giving himself power. I think he's

asking for a lot of trouble. Once you give yourself that power, then you'll have people at your door asking you to utilize that power. I think he should, in prudence, say, "I don't want this power. I want to have to go to the Legislature in order to turn that tap on."

Now, if the finance minister did decide in September, let's say, to turn that tap on, if he decided to say, "I'm going to give a billion and a half dollars to the insurance fund"—if he decided to do that, all he would have to do is unilaterally do that. He would file supplementary estimates; this Legislature would have a total of two hours' debate—45 minutes or 35 or 37 minutes per party to talk about the exercise of that particular power.

We support many sections of this bill, but we vehemently oppose—

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I've already said that, Mr. Delaney, if you'd been listening. We oppose this section here. We oppose the interim allocation bill because they do not need that until September. They have enough spending power that they got last October. They're asking for the right to write cheques for the next year before the opposition and members of the Legislature have had the opportunity to look at the estimates; that is, line by line how the ministries are going to spend this money.

I believe that, as this government did before Christmas, they tried to have speedy budget hearings. They tried to speed them in, squeeze them in to keep the consultation at a minimum. We are seeing a continuing show of the idea that this government wants to be able to have unfettered control of writing cheques without coming to the Legislature for approval at the appropriate time.

We need to debate on this pension insurance fund. We need to protect not only those people who have a defined benefit plan in the province of Ontario, but we need to protect those who do not have a defined benefit plan.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The NDP member from Trinity-Spadina is going to be speaking to this bill in short order from his seat here on the front benches of the NDP caucus, and I'm looking forward to his comments. I will be addressing this bill later this afternoon as we get closer to prime time, I figure, oh, around 4 o'clock, and invite people to—if you want to, you will switch over to PBS or the National Geographic. Just press the last channel switch around 3:30 or so and I'll be addressing this bill. I'm looking forward to it.

I listened very carefully to Norm Sterling who, of course, is the most senior member of this assembly and the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills. I always take what he has to say with great interest. I think he's raised some important points. He's raised the need for a genuine debate around some of these very important issues. These are critical issues in the most literal sense because there are crises out there. There are crises out there around jobs, there are crises out there around pensions, and there are crises around—never mind defined benefit pensions.

There are crises out there around defined contribution pensions because all those people who have defined contribution pensions have seen their pensions erode even more dramatically than defined benefit pensions. It's a very serious issue for a wide range of people. This Americanization of pensions—defined contribution pensions—that the members of this Legislature voted for; I remember it in 1996. Members of this Legislature have a pension plan, but it's not a defined benefit plan, it's a defined contribution plan. I recall members unanimously supporting it, and I want to speak to that in about an hour's time when I get a chance to take the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Worldwide, young grads and raw recruits in the financial sector were richly rewarded by the financial institutions that employed them while they wrote securities whose underlying value depended upon prices rising forever. Prices always fall after an economic expansion, and uniquely, Canada in general and Ontario in particular avoided much of the damage caused by the failure of some \$5 trillion in securities that should never have been written in the first place, which led to the current economic climate.

This government's economic policy is Ontario's answer to that worldwide economic downturn. After every such downturn in the past, Ontario has always emerged stronger because we've made the tough decisions at the right time. Today, facing what many experts call the toughest economy in the last 80 years, Ontario has stepped up with a bold series of measures that will give Ontarians and the organizations that employ them a sustainable edge and a competitive advantage as the Ontario economy recovers and goes forward.

This province has cut your taxes. If you're a small business, Ontario has cut your taxes in this budget. If you're an exporter, this Ontario budget has cut your taxes and brought your tax system in line with the rest of the world. If you're a senior, this Ontario budget has cut your taxes, raised your property tax credit and improved your access to health care. If you're a working family in Ontario, this budget has cut your taxes; built better roads, schools, universities and hospitals, and improved your access to public service. Some 93% of Ontarians will pay less tax as a result of the measures in this budget. If for no other reason, it deserves the support of every member in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to congratulate my colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills. He's my next-door neighbour. He's spent an awful lot of time in this chamber debating budgets throughout several different administrations. We have a lot to learn from him, and I think his deputation today and his presentation to this Legislature ought not to be looked at as partisan. In fact, I thought he was trying to collaborate with the government and offer them criticisms where they were due. He also offered opportunities where we could have worked together.

That has been one of my greatest disappointments since coming this to this chamber. In fact, on the day-to-day stuff we deal with here, there's often an opportunity to tussle and debate with one another. But never since the Great Depression has this province been confronted with an economy this slow, job creation that is actually job decimation, and a period of time where taxes have increased at an unprecedented rate and the debt and the deficit are growing so quickly that we can't catch up.

My colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills made a point that suggested we convene a select committee for further study of the impacts of this economic crisis. I agree with him. There are a lot of times when I disagree with the government. I will not support this budget based on the harm it will do to my constituents. Having said that, this party stood before this government and continues to stand before this government to talk about solutions to the economy and how we can be better briefed to solve the problems our constituents are faced with.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to admit that the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills raised six or seven items in a fair way. We often are very ideological around this place, as we should be, but I have to say that the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills raised some good questions on the Tobacco Tax Act. He agrees with the government, as I do, that no one should be in possession of any unmarked cigarettes. But the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills went a bit further and talked about the fact that the provincial and federal governments are not co-operating very well in terms of enforcing the law as it relates to the manufacture and transportation of illegal cigarettes, particularly from the US into Ontario. I was part of the same committee with the member, and we did hear the other Auditor General talk about the loss of \$500 million to the Ontario government because we don't do a very good job of going after those who manufacture cigarettes illegally. Yes, there are jurisdictional issues involved. The question is: What is the Ontario government doing with the federal government to make sure we either find a way to co-operate or get the federal government to actually do its job, one or the other? But it's not happening. The Attorney General hasn't said a word about that, and this government hasn't said a word about that. That part of it is very, very true. We should be talking about that and having a debate about what we should be doing; that's one of the items with which I agree.

I'll talk briefly later about the pension benefits guarantee fund, because he raised that too. I don't have enough time to speak to that, but I will soon.

1440

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I do wish that government members would engage themselves in talking about the bill. I appreciate Mr. Delaney's remarks about the bud-

get, et cetera, et cetera, but let's talk about the legislation we're talking about, so that people back home who are watching or dealing with this can, in fact, talk about the issues that are on the table so we can have a good debate and have better laws, rather than blah-blah-blah about how wonderful the government is and how wonderful they have done for the world in the worst recession we've had in my lifetime.

I particularly want to thank Mr. Kormos, Ms. MacLeod and Mr. Marchese for dealing with some of the issues I talked about. Let's talk about the bill and not just fill this place with rhetoric. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to be speaking to a couple of items that were raised by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, and then of course raise other issues of interest to me as they relate to my portfolio and to my pleasure in attacking the government as often as I can; why would I lose that kind of opportunity?

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills talked about the Tobacco Tax Act changes. I agree with him and I agree with the government as it relates to this particular issue; that is, no one should be in possession of any unmarked cigarettes, because clearly they're illegal, and whatever is illegal is something we shouldn't be condoning and/or supporting. I think that's a good start, but I do believe the Attorney General and the Liberal government have to start getting serious about attacking the illegal manufacturing of cigarettes inside this province and outside our own borders. We know that a whole lot of trucks come through the border from the US every day with illegal cigarettes that are sold in our schools and around our schools on a regular basis, and that our students are smoking on a regular basis. We know they are caught with illegal cigarettes—we know this—but it goes on. And not once—not once—have I heard the Attorney General or any other member of the cabinet of this Liberal government say, "This is wrong, this is bad and we're going to go after the manufacture and transportation of illegal cigarettes no matter where they are made."

Something is wrong in the state of our affairs in Ontario when there's actually no debate on this matter. The Auditor General says the Ontario government is forgoing \$500 million because of the manufacturing of illegal cigarettes and the selling of illegal cigarettes—half a billion bucks. It would be better if people weren't smoking, of course, but the fact of the matter is they do, and a lot of the times the cigarette butts that we find outside of our schools are cigarette butts that are illegally made. So that's the debate that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills introduced in the Legislature but a couple of moments ago, and in that regard, I absolutely agree with him. And in this regard, yes, it's a debate that we should be having. I thought it was a very good observation on the basis that he's the Chair in that committee and I happened to be, that day, a member reviewing those stats, and I found the arguments made by the Auditor

General and others compelling. So we should have a debate.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills talked about the pension benefit guarantee fund and talked about how 30% of people, who were largely in unionized jobs, have access to this particular fund. He raised the question about whether or not that fund should even exist. I think it should. I think it's a benefit that people have acquired over the years, and I think they should continue to have the benefit of that fund.

But he does raise the question about what happens to the other 70% of the people who don't have any pension, let alone any guarantee fund that they can access in the event of a breakdown in their workplace. In that regard and on that basis, I think we need to have a debate, because 70% of the public has absolutely nothing else except access to the Canada pension plan. One must assume, of course, that they've been working for 30, 35 years steadily and contributing, and that they would have access to the old age security. Those are the two funds that most human beings have access to in this province, in this country, assuming the people have been working and paying into the Canada pension. If you've paid into this fund over the last 33, 35 years, you have, between those two pensions, close to about \$15,000 a year. That barely pays for your taxes. Depending on where you live, it barely pays for your property taxes. I exaggerate to make the point, but people are paying \$5,000, \$6,000 for their taxes in the city of Toronto; that's a whole lot of money. Then they've got to pay the bills. You figure it out. You know all the bills that you've got to pay. At the end of it, what do you have left as a senior, if you do not have access to a private pension? And 70% do not.

Now, some are well paid and they have, depending on their salary, up to \$18,000 to contribute into an RRSP. For those lucky enough and wealthy enough to be able to not have a defined benefit plan but earn over \$150,000—over \$100,000, \$150,000 or \$200,000—and able to put aside up to \$18,000 in RRSPs, that's not so bad; you're doing not too badly. But it's still casino-playing. You're playing in a casino, as we are, as MPPs. We have a defined contribution plan. We don't have a pension plan, courtesy of Mike Harris, one of the former Premiers of this province. Mr. Kormos likes to make fun all the time about these things. Mr. Kormos is a champion of a defined plan. He spoke so frequently about our need to have that pension plan, and he's going to speak to it again very shortly. But we don't have a defined plan as MPPs.

Mr. Harris did well because he was vested, as the language goes, and he was here for many years as Premier. When he left I think he had \$800,000, close to a million bucks. He did okay. Some others did not. Those who were only here for a couple of years didn't do very well. But I believe we should all have a defined benefit pension plan, all of us. All the workers should have access to a defined pension plan, because in this country, if all you rely on is a Canada pension and old age security, it isn't much. So I believe we should have that

debate. Why is it that people cannot contribute to a private pension plan? Why can they not do it? They should be able to do it and they should be able to have access to another pension plan. Whatever it takes, we should be doing it.

1450

I think the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills might have a different view than mine, because he raised the question of whether we should be having a defined plan at all within government. That I don't support. I think people are entitled to a defined benefit plan, and I decry the fact that 70% of the public does not have one. They too work hard. Everyone works hard. It doesn't matter what kind of a job you're in. In this country, if all you have is access to a Canada pension plan and old age security, you're almost poor, you're very poor, and you really have to tighten your belt to be able to survive. It doesn't matter who that is.

But I know in the Italian-Canadian community, one of the things they talk about all the time whenever we meet is their pension and how inadequate that is. This is where I attack the federal Liberals, because they've been there forever, with the exception of a few stints with the Harper regime. The Liberals have been there forever and the pensions have been low because of the Liberal government on the whole, and Italian Canadians still vote for the Liberal Party. It doesn't matter who is in there and it doesn't matter the lack of benefits; they keep on voting for the Liberal Party. Yet every time I meet some Italian Canadian at the door, it's about the pensions and how inadequate they are. So I say to those Italian Canadians, it's time for a change. It's time to consider other parties; it's time to consider other parties who are interested in them, because the only ones who talk about the inadequacy of the pensions are New Democrats. The only ones who believe that those pensions should change and be different and should be raised are New Democrats. The only ones who believe we should have access to more and more defined benefit plans are New Democrats.

You can see universally, in Canada and beyond, corporate desire to get rid of the defined benefit plan. There is a movement afoot in Canada and beyond to get rid of the defined benefit plan. You see it every day. Those who read the business section in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* talk about the unsustainability of our current pension plans. What they mean is, "How do we get rid of these defined pension plans?" That's really what they mean when they say they are not sustainable. How come? Why aren't they sustainable? And if they are not sustainable, how do we make them sustainable? That is the question, rather than saying, "We can't do it anymore. It should be a contribution plan." You kick in a couple of bucks, the employer kicks in a couple of dollars, and you invest whatever few dollars you got into an RRSP, and then you throw your money into the casino and you say, "God bless. Hope for the best."

Casino investments, casino gambling, are just not good. In the end, you lose. Casinos were invented to steal your money so that somebody becomes rich. In this

particular case, governments make close to \$2 billion because of people's desire and love to gamble. It's a sad thing that governments have to rely on casinos now because we're addicted; everyone's addicted to that money, just like the addicted poor folks who go to gamble. The majority of them lose their money and their shirts. There are terrible stories of people who lose their homes and second homes, those people who gamble and who take from their family, from their wives, from their brothers and sisters, from their relatives. It's just a terrible mess, casino gambling. "Defined contributions," they call it, and that's what we're moving to. And yes, we need to have a debate. Boy, do we need to have a debate.

I wanted to talk about those two issues that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills raised, and I want to talk briefly about the response to his remarks by Bob Delaney, from Mississauga-Streetsville. This government used to say to the Conservative government, "We have cut corporate taxes to the bone. We're not going to do it anymore." Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, said to the Tories, "We're not cutting corporate taxes anymore."

That was but six months ago, and what has happened since? They say, "Oh, the economy has changed so badly, so dramatically, so drastically that we've got to cut corporate taxes even more." How do you make sense of that? Those of you who are left-leaning Liberals, how do you make sense of that, and how do you support your leader when he reverses himself and gives away \$4.2 billion over a three-year period to corporations that do not need my money? He takes \$4.2 billion of my money—yes, it is partly my money and yours and the money of all the taxpayers who are watching this program, all the citizens who are watching this program. He's giving away \$4.2 billion to corporations who do not need our money. These are dollars that go to profitable corporations. They don't need our money, but McGuinty says, "Yes, they do." He's reaching into my pocket and your pockets, and he says, "I want to give \$4.2 billion away to the corporations, because they need your money."

They need my money? The corporations need my money? Rather than give back to society, you're going to take from me so I can give them \$4.2 billion over three years? Why would you do that, Premier McGuinty? To every left-leaning Liberal: Have you thought about it; have you spoken about it in your caucus; did you have the debate; did you go after the Premier and any other minister who supports this? What did you do? Where were you? Where are you? If you exist as a left-leaning Liberal, I don't hear you. I don't hear your voices; I don't hear the debate. All I hear is \$4.2 billion going away to the corporate sector because they say they need to be competitive.

Have you noticed that every year for the last 15 years we have given more and more to the corporate sector and every year the corporations say, "We're still not competitive." When are they going to be competitive? When does it end? They're never competitive, it seems. They

keep taking money away from me and giving it to them, and they keep saying, "It's not enough; we can't compete." Well, when are you going to be able to compete? Tell us, left-leaning Liberals, when are we going to be able to compete? Where are you? If any one of you is a left-leaning Liberal, raise your hand. Where were you? Did you have the debate? No. I didn't see that. I didn't hear you. I didn't hear that debate.

To the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, I know it's your job. You're a good soldier—you are—and you've got to defend your government. That's what you do. He gets paid to defend the government; I understand that.

But you have just introduced harmonization of the GST and the PST. You got together with Flaherty, the finance minister at the federal level—he used to be the finance minister over here. The two of you got together in the backrooms—in the backrooms, you understand, with Harper yet, in agreement to harmonize the PST and the GST. Did you left-leaning Liberals notice that not once did McGuinty or Finance Minister Dwight Duncan criticize Flaherty? Do you notice? He's mum. He was silent. He didn't say a word. Do you know why? Because there was a pact. There was an agreement to give away \$4 billion to hush them up. All it took was \$4 billion from Harper, the friend of these Conservatives here, to hush them up.

1500

You've got to understand, I've been urging the Tories to let it all out, just go after their federal cousins, but they too are hushed, as if the money that they got from the federal government to this provincial Liberal government has quietened them all down, quietened the Liberals, quietened the Tories. There is some harmony afoot here between these two levels of government. They have been so tight in the last little while. With that \$4 billion that the federal Tories gave to the provincial Liberals, they've been able to say to a whole lot of people at the higher-income level, "Don't worry, we're going to give you a couple of bucks just to shut you down."

But you understand this is a permanent hit? This tax, harmonized provincial and federal, is going to be with us in perpetuity. You're going to be whacked till you die. You're going to be whacked with a tax every time you buy something till you die. Your children are going to be whacked till they die. You understand? The \$4 billion that the feds gave you has hushed all the criticism up and is an attempt to hush a whole lot of people by saying: "You're going to get \$1,000. Don't worry. Three instalments, but you'll be okay."

What happens after that, McGuinty? When my three instalments are in my pocket, then what? You're going to be whacked in perpetuity, eternally, till you die. A whole lot of middle-class folks are going to get hit with that unfair tax. Every time you buy a product, you're going to get hit, each and every day. So the people who earn anywhere from \$40,000, you're going to get whacked forever.

Dalton McGuinty says this is revenue-neutral. No, it isn't. This is about making money. It's about making

money. It says that every time you buy a product, you're going to get taxed, and you're going to get taxed good. It's a consumption tax, and it's going to be there forever. It's a tax from which they are going to raise billions and billions of dollars. In the short little while, the \$4 billion given by Flaherty, he's just going to give to a couple of people to keep them all quiet and happy. After that, we'll be stuck with it forever.

So is this a great budget that the Liberals have introduced? Not in my mind.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I've always listened to the member opposite from—what is it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Dave Levac: Trinity—Spadina—I want to say Spinity Tradina. It's that dyslexia in me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Holy Trinity.

Mr. Dave Levac: The Holy Trinity.

He raised three key issues. I think I've got it right. In the first, he started off with concern for illegal cigarettes, talked about the pension reform proposals and then ended with his concern for the harmonization tax. Of those three key issues, I want to try to touch on at least one of them for sure, but I'll see if I can get to the other ones. I'd like to see if he could come back and explain. When he said "the perpetual whack" of this particular harmonization, has he acknowledged that 93% of all Ontarians will be receiving a decline in their income tax? That's permanent.

The other question I want to ask him about is the pension plan. He's aware of the teachers' pension plan, how that evolved and the fact that in the old days, when both of us were in the profession, the pension was set up so that the only way in which the teachers could have an investment done was if they lent it back to the government for 3%, and the evolution of that particular fund took on a new life when negotiated between the teachers and the government of the day. I would say that yes, indeed, there is some room for some very honest debate with how we proceed with pensions and what we should be doing to ensure that people are safe and secure in the future. I'm going to say a blunt yes, that I think we should be debating that. It's about time that we got a fulsome debate about the whole evolution.

The second is the cigarette—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, stop him.

Mr. Dave Levac: Wholesome. Wholesome.

We talk about the cigarette issue, and the picture painted was a little bit bleaker than what it is. The RCMP, the OPP, and the federal and provincial governments are working with ways in which to capture some of this illegal trade and working towards a solution. So I would hope that we would work together to find that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the member from Trinity—Spadina, on two things in particular.

I'm not sure where the member from Trinity-Spadina has been in the last number of weeks for question period, but without a doubt we have been raising the issue of illegal cigarettes. Our party has been giving examples of where illegal cigarettes have been sold and highlighting the issues during question period in this Legislature. We've even shown a scientific investigation on what's in these illegal cigarettes, and I can tell you it's more than just tobacco. So I think we're in agreement that more needs to be done on that.

On the HST, we in this party have also been raising, during question period, the many problems that we foresee and that are happening with the HST. He made reference to an understanding that was happening between the parties federally and in Ontario, and I have to say that question period has shown that we have raised lots of concerns with the HST. The 13% tax is going to be a problem. Whether you're a senior, a student, on a fixed income, on a low income, it's going to mean a huge change, and it's a tax grab by the provincial Liberals. We've been highlighting that, and I hope that we will continue to work together to highlight the problems that are happening in the federal and provincial harmonization that's occurring with the 13% tax.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

I, too, sat through the explanation by the member for Trinity-Spadina as to why New Democrats won't be supporting this budget bill because of its failings: its absolute failure to meaningfully address the pension issue, its absolute failure to address the incredible new costs that are going to be imposed upon, especially, those lowest-income families. Those very lowest-income families are going to be bearing an inappropriate new cost, and not just inappropriate, but one that's disproportionate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Unfair.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Sales taxes in and of themselves are unfair. If the government wants to contemplate some sort of luxury tax on people who buy a \$150,000 Mercedes-Benz S series, that's something we might want to sit down and talk about. If the government wants to sit down and make sure that those corporate rip-off artists, the corporate bandits, the \$500,000-a-year-plus people who drive companies into the ground and kill thousands of jobs and then walk off with incredible golden handshakes—if the government wants to talk about taxing those lump-sum payments a little more thoroughly, well, hey, we're ready to sit down and talk. If the government wants to talk about capping corporate salaries at a point in time when corporate thieves, the ones in the boardrooms, are ripping off little people left and right across the province, well, then, we're prepared to sit down and talk about that.

But imposing new and disproportionate taxes on the poorest people in the province—don't give me "income tax reduction" stuff. Many of these people don't pay income taxes; they don't make enough money to pay

incomes tax. You get it? It means absolutely nothing to them, because the poorest people, the ones who don't pay any income tax, are still out there buying consumer products and spending every penny of their income on them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to comment on my neighbour here, the member from Trinity-Spadina. I was listening intently—

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, you weren't.
1510

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I was. I was, because when the member speaks, we listen. Now that he has been moved up to the front benches, we have to listen doubly attentively, obviously, with the clout that he carries.

I'm going to be able to speak about this in a few minutes, following the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and I'll talk about some of the things that are happening in my riding dealing with the budget that we introduced in this House just a couple of weeks ago. But I guess, a bit confusing—maybe in his response he could address this. We often, as I am in my riding or even here at Queen's Park—you know that we're always encouraged to work with other levels of government, with municipal, federal; none of this tug-of-war back and forth. Here we are, we're following the lead of three or four other provinces across this country that have a harmonized tax. We're working with the federal government on how we can make that best step in Ontario to help us during this economic time. And yes, we're giving back to some folks some of their hard-earned money. So here we are accomplishing the task of working together with other governments and putting those measures in place that help Ontarians, but I gather from the member that he's against trying to give those Ontarians, whether in permanent tax incentives or in one-time negotiated, some money to move forward.

He talked an awful lot about pensions and the structure of pensions. Yes, maybe we should have that debate. Relating it to gambling? Well, I don't know where we've all been, but in the last five or six months the whole world is in a gambling situation because we don't know from day to day where we're going to be.

I look forward to talking about this a little bit later.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Trinity-Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just to agree and restate the argument my colleague from Welland made: If the government were taxing luxury items, we'd be on board with that, because if you're buying expensive items that most human beings can't afford and you want to tax them, I say God bless, go after them. He's right about that. This is not the case. They're going to harmonize a tax, the PST and the GST, on all items that everyone needs and needs to buy. So it isn't just a couple of things that we're going to go after and make sure those who have the money will pay. It's about a harmonized tax, the PST and

GST, that the Conservatives federally and provincial Liberals are in bed with and have done silently, with the \$4 billion they got from the Tories to give to the Liberals to quiet them down. They did this together. This is the wrong, unfair tax.

The member from Brant talks about the fact that 93% of the people get a tax break. McGuinty is giving me an income tax break. I don't need that tax break. Yes, those earning under \$36,000 need it and that's okay, but to give wealthy Ontarians an income tax break makes absolutely no sense. So why you would defend that and why your government defends it as a good thing when you need that money to be able to make sure the services are kept in the province, rather than giving me money that I don't need, as a well-paid Ontarian—this is wrong. When you, with pride, say, "This is great; I'm giving you an income tax cut"—please. You haven't thought it through, most of you left-leaning Liberals, if some should exist. Where are you? Raise your voices in unison against McGuinty and what he's done with his budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: First off, I'd like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time speaking to Bill 162 with the member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Although I've had the opportunity to speak in the House on a couple of occasions since being sworn in as the new member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, this is the first time that I am able to stand in this House and formally thank the voters of my riding both for taking part in the election process and for placing their confidence in my ability to represent them at Queen's Park. It meant so very much to my family, and I enjoy their support. Thank you to all the voters, Liberal and not, of my riding's many communities for engaging in this contest. Thank you for demonstrating that our democratic process is alive and well. I am sure that this has been said many times in this room, but I am truly honoured and humbled to be standing here as a member of provincial Parliament in this great province of Ontario.

There are many people that I should thank personally for helping to show me the way to Queen's Park, but I know that if I start to name people I will forget someone, so I would just like to thank personally the two people who first pushed me into public life in 1997. The former director of education for the Victoria county district school board, Diane Dalton, and the principal of my children's elementary school, Grandview Public School in Manvers township, Hugh Armstrong, were the two people who tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You can make a difference." They convinced me to run as a public school trustee, and that changed my life. The path they set me on led me to this moment before you today.

As this is an opportunity to introduce myself to the Legislature, I would like to provide my fellow members with a brief biography of myself. I hope that by giving you a bit of my background, you will know me better and understand why I am here with you today.

I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. My father was a firefighter with the city, and my mother ran

the house and guided me, my older brother Gary and my younger sister Karen. My mother died of breast cancer in 1966, when I was 12. I can remember my father saying many years later that if it wasn't for our country's health care system, he would have lost everything when my mother was sick.

I believe that we can never let our health care system be forfeited for political purposes. It has become an integral part of what our province and our country are. I am proud that our budget continues to support our provincial health care system by increasing the allocation to health care while looking for ways to help make our society healthier through education and health promotion.

I met my wife, Terri, while attending high school in Winnipeg. We actually formed a rock 'n' roll band together in 1971, and then moved to Ontario in 1976, a year after we were married. We spent the next three decades touring the province and country with our music. We've recorded eight albums or CDs of original music. It was an incredible experience, because it gave me the chance to spend time in so many areas of the province and country meeting people, hearing their stories and learning what makes our province tick.

The arts stand as a pillar for our culture as a people. Music and the arts opened doors for me to colleges and universities across the country. For this reason I sometimes explain that I have been to more universities than some of the more accomplished academics—and many in this room, as a matter of fact.

During our career in music, we were fortunate to work and tour with a virtual who's who of Canada's music industry. Music is a huge part of our arts and culture industry that provides approximately 4% of our country's gross national product—an industry that is so vital to who we are as a province and a nation. As much as Karen Kain's artistry personified Canadian dance, so too did Gordon Lightfoot, Tom Cochrane, Bruce Cockburn, Rush and so many others become a part of who we are as a people. I'm very proud to say that the musicians Neil Young and Serena Ryder were both born in my riding.

Our budget provides assistance to our current arts and culture community through numerous grants that support festivals and events across Ontario. The budget also provides guidance and support to our future artists through the Ministry of Education's investment in specialist teachers in our province's schools. My hope is that through exposing our children to music and art in our schools, we won't miss the next Beethoven, Picasso or Lennon and McCartney. No child with potential should be denied a chance to excel because of his or her social standing.

It was during these travels with my wife that we decided to purchase our home near Pontypool, where we have lived for the past 22 years. Our two children, Patricia and Michael, were born there and attended school there, and it has truly become our home and our community.

As a member of that community, I successfully ran for the office of public school trustee for the Trillium Lake-

lands District School Board in 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2006. I served as board chairperson on two occasions. I was elected president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association four times, a feat duplicated only by the member from Guelph.

I am very proud of my term as a school trustee, and I believe that school trustees perform an invaluable service to communities across Ontario. They are empowered to make sure that the knowledge of past generations is passed along to our province's most valuable natural resource, our children.

As president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, I was able to visit almost all the public boards in the province, from Moosonee to Windsor and from Kenora to Cornwall. I learned so much about the unique challenges that school boards, and people in general, face in our province. My experience in music and education has given me an incredible insight into the people of this province, and I look forward to drawing on that experience as I take on my role as MPP.

The residents in my community spoke very clearly on March 5 about local democracy and the importance of being represented by a local resident. The minister from London North Centre described local democracy so clearly for me at an event during my campaign. She said that our democracy works when residents from all areas in our province send a person from their community to be their voice in the Legislature. It is from these collective voices that good decisions are made in the best interests of our province. I believe that, and I am glad the people in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock believe that as well.

1520

They also believe in and spoke clearly to me about their support of a strong public education system, a system that brings children and communities together, an education system that will prepare our children to face a world that does not yet exist. It will be through our well-funded public education system and the successful students it produces that our province will emerge from this worldwide economic crisis stronger and better prepared for the future.

Our students are doing better. Test results have improved over the past six years; graduation rates have improved over the past six years. These improvements didn't happen by accident but by focused investments into our education system and by the hard work and dedication of our province's teachers and support staff. Every staff member in our schools, from the custodians to the directors of education, play an integral part in the success of a child.

As a trustee, I have been privileged to visit hundreds of schools, both within my riding and across the province, to witness firsthand the amazing work going on to promote student success. During the election, on several occasions I was accused of focusing too much on the importance of education in solving so many of our current economic issues. As someone who has spent a great portion of my life working to improve education through

out our communities and across the province as a parent and a trustee, I refused to apologize for that focus. I am guilty; guilty of thinking that education is the keystone to any arch of prosperity and peace for our families. Education means better jobs. Education means better health care. Education means safer communities. Education means greener communities. Education means smarter agriculture. Education is the key to our province's future.

I am pleased to join the team that brought effective change to this province through these past six years—a team that works well with federal and municipal governments, no matter their stripe, to make people's lives better; a team that is not afraid of making tough tax decisions to better prepare our province for the future; a team that has worked towards addressing the social deficit that was inherited in 2003; and a team that cares about hard-working people in this province.

In this budget, our government has announced an investment in infrastructure of \$14 billion a year for the next two years. This investment will help to get people to work and address the province's infrastructure needs. The Minister of Finance has also announced that there will be a \$14-billion deficit next year as well. My math says that our government could have decided to make no investment in infrastructure and jobs and to balance the budget instead, but that decision would have been devastating to our province, and I am proud that our government chose the path to economic recovery in this budget that it has. I urge all the parties in this Legislature to support this budget because the only way we can improve the lives of those in our province is by coming together in these very tough times. There is no room today for the politics of division.

People in my riding and across the province are worried. Seniors are worried about their pensions; parents are worried about their jobs and their children's future. We are watching our investments disappear. College funds are shrinking and people are looking towards the government for leadership and support. We all need to work together for the sake of your neighbours, your parents, your children and everyone else who is worried and looking for help during this global economic crisis. The people in Ontario are looking to the people in this room to be there for them. They are looking for us to guide this ship through troubled waters.

There has been a change at Queen's Park since our government was elected in 2003. We have worked hard to promote an attitude of peace and stability in every area of the public sector. Billions of dollars have been reinvested into our hospitals, infrastructure and education. Our government has reversed the downloading of services that the previous government so graciously forced upon municipalities during their last term. This has been good news for my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, but there is so much more to be done.

My community is looking for the government's support for the riding's infrastructure needs and they have elected me to be their voice as we work together to fight

this recession. Whether it's making the right decision on roads and highways, investing in and preserving the waterways throughout Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, encouraging our farmers—starting with giving them the respect that they've earned—or developing and encouraging tourism throughout the riding, we need to continue to work at it.

My riding also has one of the oldest demographics in the province, which in turn makes the health care needs and costs in my riding above average as well. I'm sure that this is also true in many rural communities. Although our population numbers may be low, our needs for seniors are often higher. Many seniors and less fortunate people move to rural communities because of the lower cost of living, but that fact creates greater pressure on our local municipal governments and health care providers.

I spoke many times during my campaign about making sure that our seniors live with the dignity and respect they have earned, and I believe that we need to further protect our seniors by looking into a rural transit model so people can get to the store or the doctor, the things that help keep seniors in their homes. Many seniors have a hard time in their homes keeping up with the basic things they need to do, whether it's touch-ups, small home repairs, cutting the lawn, shovelling snow, or fixing peeling paint. I would like to see our seniors' home care program expanded so that more could be done to allow our seniors to stay in their homes for as long as it is possible. Dollars invested into a program like this would be dollars saved from our health care budgets.

We need to make sure that our local kids can be rightly encouraged to come back and work and live where they grew up. My former school board surveyed a recent graduating class and found out that just 11% of the grads believed they would find a job and live in the riding. This was a very disappointing answer. We all want our children to live and work close to the homes that they were raised in, but today that reality is not yet fully realized in rural Ontario. Keeping families together builds stronger communities. I believe that as a government we need to look at ways that we can spread public service jobs across the province so that our rural communities can thrive again. Our highways need to bring workers to jobs both in and out of our major cities.

During my campaign, I spoke often of the need to preserve and protect our history. As I stand in this historic building speaking to you, I'm constantly reminded of the history that has taken place within these walls. Since being elected, I have spent many late nights in this building and I have taken the time to look at the paintings that decorate the halls. The workmanship that has gone into the carvings and paint in this room is a treasure and a monument to the artists that created them. My riding also contains many treasures, but they need help and a lot of tender loving care. The province's last grain elevator in Pontypool, the Austin mill in Kinmount, and the Academy Theatre in Lindsay are just a few of the historical and cultural landmarks that deserve our attention. They define our heritage and who we are.

I plan to work hard as the MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock to help make my community a destination for families of all ages to move to, a community with a thriving agricultural sector, a year-round tourism industry, a first-class public education system, a roads system that will allow businesses and visitors quick, safe access, a community with a thriving arts sector, a community where anyone will be welcomed, a community that anyone would be proud to call home.

My riding has enjoyed superb local representation more often than not over the past few decades, no matter the stripe of the MPP, local representation that understood our values, our needs, our history and our opportunities. I am honoured that my community has placed their confidence and trust in me to be their voice in this historic chamber, not just as a Liberal, not just as a long-time community servant, but as a local father, businessman and member of this, my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

My community has high expectations for everyone in this room. I believe that many of their expectations and needs are addressed in this budget. My community expects us to work together. I urge all members to support this budget so that we can get to work for all of our communities.

In closing, I would like to thank the Premier both for his confidence in my candidacy and for the effective, stable, consistent leadership that he has brought to our province. I am proud to be a colleague in such a government, and, again, honoured to be the voice and representative on behalf of the good folks of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Thanks as well to the members on all sides of this House for your advice and for the warm welcome that you have given me.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence today and I look forward to working with all of my fellow members on behalf of the people of this great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde): Thank you. I believe that you are sharing your time with the member from Northumberland-Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me first congratulate the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I know I've done this in the past, but welcome to Queen's Park. I know you'll make a great addition not just to our party but to the whole legislative process with your background. It's an honour to follow you today.

Mr. Speaker, yes, I'm going to speak about Bill 162, but the approach I'm going to take in the few minutes I have left is really to bring to this House some of the comments that I have received since the budget was introduced a couple of weeks ago.

I'm just going to quote from some of the media articles. I want to clarify that the quotes are going to be considerably positive about the budget, but I do get some calls about some issues where people might not understand, and whenever I have the opportunity, not only do my staff respond to those, but I take the time to call these folks directly. In many cases it's a matter of explaining that this was a budget of more than one plank.

1530

I'm going to begin with an article from the Trentonian, on the day after the budget, after I had the opportunity to speak to the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce. I'll just quote:

"Trenton-based Royal LePage real estate agent, Mike Cowan"—by the way, Mike Cowan is also the president of the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce—"said the harmonized tax likely won't affect the local market for the simple reason not many buyers are moving into \$500,000-plus homes.

"I don't think the harmonized tax will have a huge impact on us," said Cowan.

"We don't see a lot of homes being constructed over \$500,000. People are moving towards homes between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet. When people move to high-end homes, they really want high-end," said Cowan. "That's not really happening in this area."

That is from the east end of the riding.

From the west end of the riding, one of the articles after the budget, from one of the Northumberland papers:

"As the minimum wage rose from \$8.75 to \$9.50 across Ontario this week, Northumberland poverty activists and the business community were in agreement that it is a good thing for the area"—and I will have those quotes from those folks.

"Mary Anne Rowlands, managing director of the Help Centre, is happy to see the minimum wage increasing to \$9.50 per hour"—this is dated April 2, 2009.

"While many in the business sector have lamented the raise to the minimum wage as doing serious damage to their bottom line, Bruce McCartney, president of the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce, doesn't see it that way. He's not opposed to minimum wage going up, and thinks many small business owners already pay more than minimum wage to retain the best workers."

"If you want to have good people come work for you, you have to pay more than the minimum wage," said Mr. McCartney....

"Poverty activists think the raise could actually be a boon for the local economy.

"The small businesses are going to be the first to benefit," said low-income poverty activist Paula Fillion. "When those increases come in, the first thing they're going to do is spend it locally."

Mr. McCartney, the president of the local chamber, went on to say his "big concern is that Ontario's minimum stays close to minimum wages across the world, so businesses don't move their operations and jobs to other countries to lower labour costs.

"We are in a global economy, so if our minimum wage is much higher than somewhere else, it's going to have an impact," said Mr. McCartney....

"Minimum wage should be going up a tad every year," said Mr. McCartney."

I quote that because those are basically the steps that our government has been taking in both the local—as you

can see from these quotes from these people, they agree with our philosophy that we've incorporated.

Out of Northumberland Today, which serves Cobourg, Port Hope and Port Colborne: "Lois Cromarty, head of a county poverty reduction committee, supported the early, almost doubling of the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 per child per year starting this July, along with permanent funding for rent banks"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm sorry, the member has run out of time. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: First of all, congratulations to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock on his maiden speech. He noted that Serena Ryder is from his riding. That name certainly catches my attention because Serena is probably my daughter Renee's favourite singer. I think she's seen her half a dozen times in concert. We've accused her of being a stalker of Serena at this point. In fact, she's got her parents motivated to go watch Serena when she plays at the Stockey centre in Parry Sound in early July.

The member, in his maiden speech, brought up a few points, one of them being the importance of education, and certainly I would agree with that.

I can't help but highlight some issues in my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, where they finished the accommodation process and decided that the best thing to do in the Near North District School Board is to close two primary schools and open one new school. They made that decision and went through the process but are now waiting for the government to act. So I'd encourage them to get the Minister of Education to act on that so Parry Sound can get going with that new primary school.

I'd also point out that in Parry Sound we need a new high school and in Huntsville we need a new high school, and the Near North District School Board is facing some huge budget challenges this year.

On another education-related issue, we need the boards of education across the province to decide to start the calendar year after Labour Day. Trillium Lakelands District School Board is revisiting the issue this week, but we need them all to start after Labour Day so that it doesn't negatively affect one of the industries he talked about, and that is tourism. I'm sure it would be negative for tourism in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, as it would be for tourism in Parry Sound-Muskoka, if the calendar school year started before Labour Day instead of the time when it usually starts, which is after Labour Day.

Madam Speaker, those are all the points I have time to communicate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. It was a pleasure to be here to listen to the inaugural speech of Rick Johnson, the new member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Of course, we used to call them "maiden speeches," but that isn't politically correct anymore. Maybe it's just as well; "inaugural speech," in fact, says so much more.

However, I do want to tell that member that as I listened carefully to his references to Canadian musical icons, I was heartbroken to note the omission of Walter Ostanek from Port Colborne, the polka king of the world. Walter Ostanek has received more Grammy nominations than the Rolling Stones. I would simply encourage my colleague to, please, think of Walter Ostanek. Stompin' Tom Connors: My God, I age myself, but the Guthrie-esque Stompin' Tom belongs on anybody's list. The list could go on for so long. But I've got to tell you, I was delighted just this morning, in the very early morning, as I'm getting ready to come over here to Queen's Park listening to 96.3, who do I hear but Malka and Joso. That brought back incredible musical memories. Of course, Joso, who lives in Croatia now, still drops in at the restaurant occasionally in the summertime, and you can run into him.

The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has proven himself to be a hard-working and capable member. I'm sure he's going to bring a great deal not only to this Legislature but to his caucus. His caucus and the Premier need a great deal brought to them, and this is just the man who can do it. I'm looking forward to seeing it happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: It was a pleasure listening to my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock reminiscing about his involvement in music and certainly his appreciation of Canadian music. I got to thinking of the Tragically Hip and their iconic song about Bobcaygeon that we all know, and the incredible—although I do agree about Stompin' Tom Connors; he should have mentioned Stompin' Tom. Who can forget Tillsonburg, and on and on?

But I just want to say that he does represent—we have so many beautiful parts in this province, but that part of the province is just spectacular. It's so close to the GTA. The Kawartha Lakes—I spent some time at Lake Catchacoma up there, and it's beautiful. There's the Buckhorn Fine Art Festival. It's just an incredibly beautiful part of this province. It's rugged. It has small towns and cities like Lindsay and Fenelon Falls. It is worth visiting.

The people there have really got a strong independent streak in them. As you know, many of the pundits predicted another outcome in that by-election, all the so-called experts and talking heads, who had already decided who was going to win that election. But the people of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock made up their own minds and they said, "We are the ones who are going to choose our MPP."

I think they've chosen a very good one, who really is compassionate. He's also very passionate about the people he represents. He cares about the basics, and the basics go to education and building those strong communities so people can have their health care, can have their good schools and be proud of this spectacular place in Ontario called Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

So congratulations on a meaningful speech, and it will be something that we'll all remember.

1540

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'll be speaking myself to Bill 162 in a moment, but I would like to comment on the member from Victoria-Haliburton—no, sorry. I always get that riding mixed up, I'm sorry. And it's right next door to me.

But there's one thing I wanted to point out, and I appreciate all his comments on the music etc. Mr. Johnson and I share a common border on the eastern end of my riding and the western end of his riding. We've got a huge amount of aggregate in this area, some of the best aggregate in the province, and it's limestone. If there's one thing we can do—because so much of the land has been purchased by the large quarry companies across the world, the Lafarges and the Beamishes; they're the owners of thousands and thousands of acres of aggregate—I think that's an area where I'd like to be able to work with him, work with the government and work with MTO, because I think one thing that's really required is a transportation master plan for aggregate in the province. Most of that aggregate heads to southern Ontario, and all you have to do is drive down Highway 12 and see the ruts in the highway from the huge tractor-trailers to know that we've got a problem. There are the safety issues as well.

So I congratulate him on basically his first speech, and I congratulate him on his victory in the election. I look forward to working with him, particularly on some of these aggregate issues.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd very much like to thank everyone who spoke in response to my speech.

The representative for Parry Sound-Muskoka: When I was chair of the Trillium Lakelands school board, we also represented the Muskoka area—that board encompasses that—and we talked about his needs for new schools in the area. I was very proud of the fact that during my tenure as chair of the board we built a brand new high school: the new Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School in Bracebridge, and also I believe it was Muskoka Falls Public School that was built a couple of years ago. So I'm very much aware of his area and look forward to having the opportunity to work with him in the future.

The member from Welland: I actually own one of Walter Ostanek's CDs. Although he's had numerous Juno Award nominations, I would just say that my wife, singer Terri Crawford, has had two, which we're very proud of, as there are not very many people in the country who can say that.

The representative from Eglinton-Lawrence, talking about all the areas in my riding: I do live in a beautiful area of this province. My wife and I, after touring this country for 20 years, made the choice to live in that area because of the quality of life it had to offer, both the

education system and just the territory. We live at the top of the Oak Ridges moraine. It's a beautiful spot to live, and we are very fortunate to be there. I'm thrilled about it.

The representative from Simcoe North: I'm very aware of the aggregate areas up there. During the campaign, I had the opportunity to go skeet shooting up in that area, in one of the abandoned areas. It was quite an experience and one I would call a highlight of the election. I did make sure I was pointing the gun in the direction of my own riding as opposed to yours.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and make a few comments on Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters. Of course, on this side of the House we hear all the negative things, and on the government side we hear all the positive things. But I wanted to speak about the budget, how it impacts my riding in a lot of ways and some of the concerns I have with it; some of the concerns I have, really, about the direction we're going as a province and maybe even as a country—maybe even a world, for that matter.

I guess I'll start out by talking about government spending and the fact that—we've said this before in the House—it took from Confederation to 2003 for the government spending to reach \$67 billion here in Ontario. I believe even as recently as when Bill Davis was the Premier of Ontario it was something like \$19 billion, \$20 billion, so even in that time it escalated. But with the spending today from 2003 to 2009, if we look at the forecast of the expenditures for the next year, we're actually going from \$67 billion to \$109 billion, which is a \$42-billion increase, or about a 62% increase in government spending in that time frame. You have to wonder, with people having smaller families, with families being a little bit smaller, how long we can sustain this kind of spending as we move forward.

Obviously the governments not only here in Ontario, but nationally, the federal government, along with a lot of the countries around the world, have decided that we have to spend our way out of these very difficult times. That's a real concern I have for my kids and my grandchildren and those in the future. It's easy to make these fancy announcements that we're going to build a new hospital here, a new school here, a new college here, but the reality is that this money is the money that we're borrowing and that our children are going to be expected to pay for.

We've got the Build Canada money coming up, phase two. I think the applications are due on May 1. We've got the stimulus package coming. These are billions and billions of dollars in the province of Ontario. A lot of municipalities are counting on getting a number of grants approved in those particular areas, but the reality is that this is all borrowed money that we're looking at that's for our children. It's really our children who will be expected to pay for that. What this really means, Madam Chair, is that—you've watched this government. We got a lot of

fancy announcements, we got a lot of fancy programs, but the reality is that by the end of this particular run of deficits, we'll be over \$200 billion in debt, so they've added about another \$80 billion on to the debt load of the province of Ontario.

I want to just point out how it will be paid down, looking at the budget document here. The spending next year will be a \$14.1-billion deficit for 2009-10; for 2010-11, a \$12.2-billion deficit; 2011-12, a \$9.7-billion deficit; 2012-13, an \$8.0-billion deficit; 2013-14, a \$5.8-billion deficit; and 2014-15, a \$3.1-billion deficit. Those will add substantial debt to our overall province. Finally, they expect that in 2015-16 we can actually pay it down.

One of the concerns I have is the amount of money the government is expecting to raise next year. When you look at this particular document, the revenues they're expecting for this coming year, 2009-10, are approximately \$96 billion. That jumps up in 2011-12 to \$103.6 billion. In very difficult economic times the government is actually expecting the revenues next year to increase by \$7.6 billion, from one year into the next. The only thing I can see on that is that this is the new harmonization coming in, and they realize that the tax harmonization will be some type of a windfall for the province, because obviously it's going to add billions of dollars in revenue. I was under the understanding it was something like \$2.6 billion, that sort of thing, but the reality is it looks like the government is expecting some very substantial increases in revenues next year. It would be interesting to hear some of the comments come back from the government side to see just why they would expect, in these difficult economic times, to have such a—it works out to be about a 7% increase in growth as far as revenues are concerned for that time.

The other thing is, we're losing these manufacturing jobs: 300,000 manufacturing jobs. It comes up every day. I was talking to a gentleman the other day who just retired. Actually he retired before the very, very difficult economic times from the parts manufacturing business. I think this guy is a very brilliant man. He's actually retired now and has a foundation of his own that distributes money to all kinds of organizations around the communities. He suspects that the automotive fallout is going to be much worse than what we're even hearing here today—whether it's the comments coming from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, from the federal minister, or even what we hear internationally, in the United States—that this may have a bigger impact than we're suggesting it could be right now.

1550

When we look at this budget document and we look at the fact that the government has this plan to lower this deficit over the next seven or eight years, I'm wondering how accurate that really is; whether it's best wishes or we're looking at a fairly positive turnaround, I'm not sure. The reality is that when you talk to some people, to some of the forecasters, it may not be quite as positive as you think.

Today I asked a question of the Minister of Tourism, and I was actually a little bit insulted. I was sort of

laughed at because I asked questions about golf courses in my riding. I actually last week had phoned or visited—not golfing—the owners of 10 golf courses in Simcoe county. I asked them what they thought of the harmonization and what they felt the impact would be. Each one of them—there were 10 of them—predicted it would cost them between three and seven employees, or approximately five employees, all or most of whom would be students. So in 10 courses, that would be 10 times five employees per course; that's 50 young people who wouldn't have a job. Quite simply, here's what their concern is. It's not that there won't be people who can afford to golf. There will always be people who can afford to go out and golf. But when a family is under pressure and they may not be able to go to as many recreational types of activities throughout the course of their year, then they will cut back on some. The harmonization tax averages about \$4 a round of golf. The gentlemen I talked to felt that the sheer numbers alone would drop quite substantially and there would end up being a loss of jobs for young people in the tourism sector.

As you know—I'm not sure if you've seen some of the data that came out last week—for student unemployment we're already at 17%. It's one of the highest in the country. We have some very, very challenging times for student employment across Ontario. Quite frankly, I was trying to find out if the minister had anything more positive. She talks about these tax cuts for all Ontarians, but you know that you can say that you are having a tax cut for all Ontarians, and some of the people are getting a \$3 tax cut or an \$8 tax cut or \$25 tax cut, when in fact the harmonization factor is costing the average senior citizen in the province of Ontario—if you look at their heating bill, the gasoline they'd require for their car etc., the harmonization could cost the average senior in Ontario around \$1,500 a year. So it's not fair to talk about the tax cut and the harmonization impact in the same sentence.

Each and every year, myself and a federal member have a display booth at the home and recreational show in Midland and in Orillia. This past weekend we had a show in Orillia. There were probably 100 people displaying their products and probably another 2,000 or 3,000 people went through the show and were looking at potential products to buy as we look forward to the summer. The things that were positive were the rebates on energy programs for water furnaces or high-efficiency heating systems. As well, the tax credit the federal government issued was very popular, because these small renovations up to \$10,000, \$12,000 would give them about a 10% rebate as they move forward with their products. So that was very popular.

I can tell you that what was negative, and I'm not trying to exaggerate this at all today, was the harmonization. Most people—I'm saying the bulk of the people, 95% of the people—were absolutely opposed to this. They felt that it was the wrong thing to do at the wrong time. Maybe they would have bought into it if the harmonization had been implemented but the sales tax had been reduced so that it would have been sort of a

revenue-neutral type of program. That might have sold more, but right now they're looking at it as a tax grab, quite frankly. They signed petitions over the weekend; I think I had about 450 signatures. I can tell you that that is something that people are very, very concerned about in my particular part of the province. Maybe the government members aren't hearing that in their ridings, but it was certainly prevalent in the riding of Simcoe North.

I can also tell you that jobs for young people are very important as well because in our area we have a huge number of tourism resorts, golf courses and ski resorts. All of the owners of these particular facilities are out there saying that it's the wrong thing to do at this particular time, that they're very concerned about the number of people they'll be hiring and that the cost of doing business is going to be very substantial as well.

As we implement the harmonization—apparently it's going to take place on Canada Day in 2010—it should be a very interesting lead-up to the implementation process if we continue to see these manufacturing jobs lost over the months, particularly if it is at the same rate as we've seen them lost. I think it was even this morning that I looked at the news, and I don't have the exact names off the top of my head, but a number of companies were having a very, very difficult time with the present economy and were look at shutting down or closing, shutting down more jobs. One of them, of course, was General Motors this morning, with the huge issues that they face.

One of the things I think we forget about when we talk about something like the harmonization or a tough economy is just how much of the work, particularly home maintenance and smaller-type jobs, will be done by the underground economy. I've talked to a number of people about this as well. My guess is that this will increase fairly dramatically in the foreseeable future; that people will be working for cash, doing things on the weekend and in the evenings, that sort of thing; and that people will just forget about paying any of the taxes as we move forward in the future. That, of course you know, is very, very difficult to police, although they've tried a few pieces of legislation here to resolve it, but it really doesn't help when people are desperate and they need a bit of work done.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the implementation of the budget and how it actually impacts the Green Energy Act, because this has become a real problem. I don't know how many people are hearing this. I know the Minister of Agriculture was present a while back in the House here, and I wanted to talk to her a little bit about it.

We have a huge farm on the 9th Concession of Oro-Medonte. It's adjacent to the Highway 400 extension. A company has leased that property with the full intention of putting in a solar farm. The people are already mad about the name "farm" because this is a beautiful farm it's going on. It's on prime agricultural land.

We've actually been getting fairly mixed messaging on what the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's stand is on these solar farms, because it's a big part of the Green Energy Act. I don't think there's a problem at all with

wind generators on farms. In fact, I've been up to Melancthon, I've seen the cornfields surrounding the wind turbines, and they seem to fit in fairly well. They're not taking up a lot of square footage of actual agricultural area. But these solar farms apparently are taking up most of the acreage in a 200- or 300-acre farm. It's a multi-million-dollar proposal. The community is very concerned about it, as is the agricultural community up there. I've heard that in the Green Energy Act hearings, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has come out opposed to building these particular units on prime agricultural land, and I hope that is the case.

1600

Earlier, when we were doing our comments with the new member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, we talked about some of the land we have up in the western end of his riding and the eastern end of my riding. This land is owned by quarry companies today. It's not good agricultural land. It's basically sort of rugged, small-shrubbery-type land. That is the sort of place where I think people feel more confident that these solar farms would fit into the equation much more easily. However, I want to point out that it is an issue. I can't support the Green Energy Act if my own constituents, including my farmers, are saying that they don't want these solar farms built on prime agricultural land. I hope the minister will listen and I hope that's an amendment that will be made to the legislation as we move forward.

The final thing I wanted to talk about in the bill is that the government seems to brag all the time about how much money they're putting into education. This is my 10th year here at Queen's Park, and it's the first time that we've ever started talking about school closings in my riding and school closings in Simcoe county. People who are in government now but were in opposition—they continually criticized Mike Harris and Ernie Eves in the past, but in our riding we weren't having school closings. Now we're seeing it. We've got a desperate situation in the village of Elmvale. It's part of Springwater township. The people are very, very concerned about that. The town of Stayner is in jeopardy of losing their high school, and also the town of Penetanguishene.

These are all independent, small, closely-knit communities that depend on their post-secondary education and they depend on their secondary schools for their existence. They're a very key part of those communities, and now we're starting to hear that the school boards, because of the lack of funding, don't have the money to keep these schools open, so they have to look at alternatives: either to combine them, shut them down or relocate them, whatever it may be. The reality is, that's what we're seeing in Simcoe county right now. I don't like it a bit, and I think it's going to come back to the minister to try to find more funding in those particular areas, because these communities are all growing. There aren't as many children in some of the families; however, they all have potential growth for the future. It's sad to think that a small village like Elmvale or Stayner or Penetanguishene, that we remotely think that we would

take their secondary school education away from these communities and bus the kids off 20 miles or 30 miles or whatever it may be so they can find a new, more modern school. The communities want the schools left alone, and I think I can speak very clearly on their behalf here today as I mention that.

As was mentioned earlier here today, I can't support Bill 162; I wouldn't support Bill 162. I think that there are far too many flaws in it, and I know also that every time anything happens in this House, the minister stands up and says, "You voted against that." There's no question; I support the corporate tax cuts. I think that's a good thing. But if there are too many bad things in this budget, if it's going to be an omnibus type of budget, you can't—one on one, you could support the corporate tax cuts, but not included with all these other what I consider defects with the government spending.

I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words today and look forward to further comments. We won't be supporting this budget, primarily because of the tax harmonization. I think that's the biggest flaw in the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm going to be speaking to this bill in around 10 minutes' time, and I suppose that's fair notice for folks to either change the channel or to stay tuned. Regrettably, because debate is so truncated here, so abbreviated, I'm only going to have 20 minutes, and I truly regret that.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I hear colleagues from the other side sharing my disappointment that I have but 20 minutes, because there's a whole lot to be spoken to. But what I'm confident I can do is, in that 20 minutes, speak for the folks who live down in Welland riding, who live in Wainfleet and Port Colborne and Welland and Thorold and south St. Catharines, even maybe some folks who used to be in the riding but have moved out, like the folks in Pelham. I have no doubt that I can speak for them because I've been talking to them during the course of last week and on the weekend. They had some very interesting things to say about this budget. They particularly enjoyed Kevin Gaudet's reference—he's from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—to this budget as a BS tax, a blended sales tax. Now, I'm not sure that when Kevin Gaudet coined the term "BS tax" and defended himself with the explanation that it meant "blended sales tax", he didn't intend for folks to draw the appropriate inferences. Understand that BST is not an acronym; it is an initialization. For something to be an acronym it has to be pronounceable. NAFTA is an acronym; IBM is an initialization. People often confuse initializations for acronyms and put them in the same group. We should be very, very careful not to confuse our initializations with our acronyms, shouldn't we, Minister of Agriculture?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I appreciate the lesson from the member from Welland, and as Minister of

OMAFRA, because I can say O-M-A-F-R-A, I'm happy to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Simcoe North.

Any time that members in the assembly speak to the issues of farmers and agriculture, I do pay close attention. I'm happy that the honourable member this afternoon has identified that the agriculture community is going to be impacted if the bill is passed—most positively, I would like to remind the honourable member. If the bill is passed, it will mean that farmers in the province of Ontario will not have to pay sales tax on vehicles or equipment—computers or freezers—that they purchase for their farm. This is very good news and has been very well received by the agriculture community.

The member also referenced the Green Energy Act, and addressed an issue of some significance with respect to solar panels on agricultural land. I am aware that the agriculture community is working with the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure to have them understand some of the challenges and issues there. But I would also like to make very clear for the honourable member who spoke—and I appreciate that he raises points with respect to agriculture—that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has clearly stated, and in fact issued a news release, that they welcome the Green Energy Act. It is welcomed by Ontario farmers because, “by welcoming wind turbines, biodigesters and the production of crops used for the production of energy on their farms,” they have demonstrated flexibility in enabling their industry to become, in addition to food producers, energy producers in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill 162 and my colleague from Simcoe North's remarks. He mentioned a number of key things. He talked about the auto sector—I think his quote was about the auto fallout—and then he spoke about seniors as well and the impact. Quite frankly, when you're talking about the impact of the auto fallout—as a matter of fact I happened to be in conversation with a former publisher for the National Post and the Toronto Sun, whose concern was that the advertising for those communities from the auto sector represents about 60% of their revenue, and look what is happening to the TV stations as a result of the media problems.

When you talk about the auto fallout and seniors, the big concern there is pensions, and how an individual who is 80 years old is going to be able to move forward. I know that I have relatives—my mother-in-law—and individuals in my office who are very dependent on the General Motors pension and what is taking place there. When you talk about this and you're talking about a budget, you have to look at all opportunities and how this is going to affect those individuals, or make funds available to somebody in their 80s to be able to live at a standard they are used to in any way, shape or form, or where they are going to be able to recoup revenues in the event there isn't support from the government.

At the time the deal was struck, there were three partners in it: the CAW, General Motors and the government of the day. When you have three partners, you should assume a third of the responsibility, and when you're dealing with that, to give some security to those individuals who are in their 70s and 80s as to how they can move forward, government needs to play its part in anything they can do in this budget to ensure that those components are looked after for those individuals in the long run. Because if and when they don't receive those funds, General Motors, for example, will no longer be able to pay for the health care costs. It'll be dependent on OHIP—also, when they drop in tax brackets. Not only that, they'll receive subsidies from the Canada pension plan or old age security, for that matter. It all comes around one way or another. We need to be there to support these individuals.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon, and I want to pick up where the Minister of Agriculture was speaking just a moment ago, about some initiatives for agricultural persons and, as well, rural Ontario. Also included in our budget is tax relief for businesses. Some of those businesses are indeed farming, fishing, mining and logging, which will see a cut in what is known as the CIT in the Ontario manufacturing and processing rate, which will be a 16.7% reduction, as I say, for farming, fishing, mining and logging. Those are all welcomed by the farm community, I am certain.

As well, through our government, there will be initiatives through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to provide monies to promote a greater knowledge of our food system; some \$8 million for a broader public sector involvement; providing \$1.5 million from the ministry to plan the development of new agri-food research centres. Those centres will be focused on livestock and crop production in the main, renewable energy, nutrition and health. Those are all very important to the rural communities, as with the broader Ontario public, and I think it's all very welcome news for them in this last budget of ours.

We'll be investing \$1 million, which will be of great benefit, shortly to our rural summer jobs services program. I know the young people in our community have availed themselves of that particular program over the years, year after year, and are very supportive of that program and grateful to the government for providing those jobs. They use it as an experience equation when they go to get their final workplace job when their education is completed.

These are all just a few of the many initiatives in this last budget put forward by our government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the member from Welland, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and

Rural Affairs, my colleague from Oshawa and the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for their comments. I think we all know where we stand on this sort of legislation, but I wanted to go back just for a moment. I know the minister made some clarifications on her role as the minister, and certainly the comments and the press releases from the OFA—I'd seen those things. What's come to light is the fact that the Green Energy Act does have an impact with the solar panels much more serious on prime agricultural land than, let's say, the wind turbines. The wind turbines take up less than, at the bottom of each concrete stand, probably around 500 square feet of land. If you put 30 generators like they have at Melancthon, you can have less than an acre of land used, and they can grow corn and hay around it. It's not a problem at all. They're quite interesting and people even like to go and view them.

The problem we've got now, what we're concerned about, and I hope this is a discussion that can take place here, is that the solar panels—on this prime agricultural land up in Oro-Medonte, it's actually going to use up 260 acres of land; not one acre, but 260 acres. Everyone thinks that green energy's not a bad idea. I mean, hardly anyone would disagree with that. In fact, we had that standing committee that went out and made those recommendations and came back. But these solar panels have to be put on more land, in our opinion anyhow, and in the comments I'm hearing from my constituents, they have to be put in areas that are more rugged, that you can't farm as good. This farm that they want to do it on in Oro-Medonte is some of the best agricultural land in the province.

That's all the time I've got.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Like almost everybody here, I spent the last week out and about, down in Welland riding—Wainfleet, Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, south St. Catharines. I was in Niagara Falls; I was over in Pelham as well. Of course, on the weekend, I went to a whole lot of community activities and I had a chance to talk to folks—seniors, unemployed workers, young people, grandparents and their grandkids. Sunday morning, Malcolm Allen, the newly elected federal member there, and Peggy Allen, his wonderful wife, and I were over at the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church at 610 Ontario Road. It's been a few years since I've been there. I got a chance to meet the new pastor. Most of the congregation were folks I've known either from my previous attendances at that church or through other contacts. These people, by God, they were worshipping God. There was music and they were clapping and they were singing and dancing and praying. It was just delightful to see such a wonderful community of people. There were probably four generations there, everything from little kids to grandmas and granddads. It was just a delightful visit to a delightful church community. Malcolm Allen and his wife, Peggy, and I look forward to getting there again.

But what we did after we left the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church—it was lunchtime, and I said to Malcolm and Peggy, "Let's go down to the Fireside Restaurant." That's over on Southworth Street, on the east side of Southworth. And, of course, the Fireside Restaurant has been run for Lord knows how many years, speaking of the Lord, by Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis. I haven't been there for a couple of years now, and first Mary came out of the kitchen and she hugged me and she kissed me, because, of course, yesterday was Easter. Yesterday was Easter for Orthodox Christians, and for my people, the Greek or Byzantine Catholics. It was nice to be with Mary and Charlie, because they're Greek folks and they were celebrating Easter as well, and they served us breakfast. I said to the waitress, "Please, could I have a little piece of feta cheese?" Well, out came a whole platter of feta, along with some black olives and some tomatoes. We finished the lunch off with some glasses of a wonderful liquid called ouzo—because we were celebrating Easter and it was in a Greek restaurant—and some wonderful little Greek pastries.

Well, who walks in but Sophie, the member for Hamilton Mountain, because of course Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis are her parents, and she grew up upstairs of that restaurant, and in it. It was a delight to see Sophie on Easter. I was ready to leave, because I had eaten more than I should have and I'd had the ouzo and I'd had the feta and the olives and the tomatoes. Sophie said no, but she came out with a platter of red Easter eggs. Sophie explained that in the Greek tradition—it's like chestnuts. You take the pointy end—maybe the Minister of Agriculture knows the name for that end, as compared to the bigger end—and one person holds it while the other person tries—and the person whose egg gets cracked loses.

Sophie is there with her family, and I'm going, "Oh, my goodness." So I give Sophie's egg the slightest little tap, and sure enough, her egg broke. I said, "Sophie, what do I do now?" She says, "I lost." She says, "Oh, no; there's the second half. Now you've got to bang the big parts." Her father, Charlie, says, "No, that's not a rule." Sophie says, "Yes, it is." I had to concede, because of course she's there with her family. I'm in her family's restaurant; I'm their guest. So, like a baseball pitcher, she swings that arm, and of course she breaks my egg. But we agreed that at the end of the day it was a tie. Neither of us had won; neither of us had lost.

But I was also down at the Welland Farmers' Market on Saturday morning. I was over at the Pelham home show. I was at the Merritton Legion, branch 138, on Saturday—as a matter of fact, with Jim Bradley. They were celebrating their 80th anniversary; as fine a group of women and men, veterans and legionnaires, as you could ever want to meet. But you know, there was a constant theme through all of these meetings. There was a constant concern being expressed by all of those folks.

1620

Young Bill Buchanan at the Pelham home show—Bill is in his third year. As a matter of fact, I went to the

Pelham home show three years ago and young Bill Buchanan was just starting out as an arborist. I had a sickly sycamore beside the house on Bald Street. Sycamores are great trees. They're native to North America, but they're susceptible to disease. Bill Buchanan, for the last three years, has been treating that tree, and it's now one of the best sycamores you've ever seen. Bill's particularly proud because he just got his master arborist certification; apparently there are only a handful of people in the province who have it. I said, "Does that mean your rates are going to go up?" He assured me that I'd be okay. But you see, just like the paving people there, and just like the home renovation people there and just like the people who sell windows and shingles, Bill is worried about the increased prices on those goods, those products, to the tune of 8%. That 8%, just like the hairdresser in the beauty salon, who works mostly for tips, who is on her feet or his feet for eight, nine, 10 hours a day earning a very modest hourly wage, depending upon tips, she might have been hoping that the owner of the hairdressing salon would increase the rates next year so that she could get a few cents more out of that increased rate. But she understands now that because of the 8% increase imposed by this government on a haircut, the cost to the consumer is 8% more. But think about it: It's also that hairdresser's raise, because the money has to come from somewhere.

I've received a lot of correspondence on this budget. I got a letter from Jacquelyn Morgan, who lives down on Canboro Road in Fenwick. Her letter is dated April 1. Can I tell you what she wrote me, Speaker? Do you mind?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Tell us. No, she doesn't mind.

Mr. Peter Kormos: "Dear Mr. Kormos:

"April 1, and I wish that the new harmonized tax were just an April Fool's joke. We are being hit so hard, why would anyone think this new tax grab is a good idea? As seniors on a fixed pension income, we face many challenges:

"—our meagre RRSPs have lost 40% of their value"—do you realize how hard these people had to work to save the money to invest in RRSPs? I'm sure you do. It's money hard come by, and 40% is gone;

"—the MPAC valuation of our home increased in this first year by \$11,750, outrageously based on outdated and inappropriate January 2008 values, resulting in a probable annual tax increase of up to \$234"—we're talking about seniors on a fixed income, people who worked hard all their lives. People who were frugal, people who saved, people who did without, people who sacrificed; people who didn't go out to restaurants, didn't buy new cars every year, were lucky if they could buy a used one every five or six, didn't have big-screen colour televisions, people who looked for the sales in the supermarkets and who clipped the coupons;

"—Ontario Hydro rates increased from \$0.05 per kilowatt hour to \$0.056 in November;

"—in January, our gas bill rose \$19.36, an annual increase of \$232.32;

"—this \$466 total illustrates only a few increases; the list goes on.

"In addition to the above increases, the following calculations are but a few of the ways the proposed HST"—Dalton McGuinty's BST, his new 8% tax—"will impact our household:

"—car and home insurance of \$2,676—add GST," Dalton McGuinty's PST, his BST, "equals \$133 per year;

"—natural gas bill of \$203.64, \$16.29 PST monthly, equals \$194.48 per year;

"—hydro bill: Add \$6.64 ... monthly, equals \$79.68 per year;

"—Christmas magazine subscriptions for my grandchildren cost about \$319.67 per year; add 8% GST, equals \$25.57 per year.

"Total equals \$432.73."

This woman is buying reading material. She's interested in helping her grandkids, buying them magazine subscriptions so they can actually read the printed word rather than becoming hooked on the Internet and on the computer and on Wikipedia and all that sort of stuff.

"Add the PST on gasoline, water, haircuts, plumber, home renovations, groceries, vitamins and minerals etc. How much will it cost the province to cut all those \$1,000 cheques and mail them anyway? What about next year and the year after that" and the year after that and the year after that? "You can't unring the bell, we'll be stuck with the HST. This is wrong for seniors and for struggling families. We are being clobbered by the economy and increasing prices for products and services. The government adds to the hardship with a proposal for HST. Please work to defeat this portion of the budget."

That's real folks, real people, hard-working people, real Ontarians, who are going to be faced with real, new struggles and hardships because Dalton McGuinty has decided to pick their pockets.

I got a letter from Cornelius J. Duffy, at 63 Romy Crescent in Thorold, a constituent of mine. He's talking about auto jobs and the importance of keeping those auto jobs and ensuring that they're still good jobs.

How many years was this government, was Mr. McGuinty, telling us in the opposition and telling the people of this province that there wasn't a crisis? He did it. Day after day after day, he stood up and said, "There's net job creation. We're in fine shape. It's hunky-dory." He insisted that the opposition were somehow making up stories, that it was fiction. Well, the jobs lost at CanGro in St. Davids—that sure as heck wasn't fiction, was it? Eight hundred jobs lost at John Deere in Welland—that wasn't fiction, was it? Atlas Steel's workers ripped off by an underfunded pension plan and still struggling with a pension benefits guarantee fund cap of \$1,000 a month. Hayes Dana, those jobs—not fiction. I suppose the only good news a whole lot of folks down in Niagara have, however perverse this sounds, is that pretty soon there are going to be no jobs left to lose.

Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals were insisting that there was net job creation. What hooley; absolute, unadulterated bull spit. You know it, and so do they. I can't

for the life of me understand how Liberal backbenchers go home to their communities on weekends—maybe they don't—and look people in the eye. Do they emulate their great leader, Dalton McGuinty, and wring their hands and say, "Oh, we feel your pain"? Do they sing 1930s Depression-era Broadway songs about the sunny side of the street? Or are they a little more practical and tell their folks that there'll be pie in the sky when they die?

We're well beyond mere statistics. We're talking about real folks, real families, real workers, real retirees. We're talking about real pain. We're talking about real despair. We're talking about real fear.

How many times have I had occasion to comment that as a kid in the 1950s, I know for a fact the concern of so many people was not living long enough, and now every one of us has people coming into our constituency offices worrying about living too long because they don't know whether or not they can afford to.

1630

You've got people coming into your constituency offices, telling you that they really looked forward to helping their grandkids go to college and university, and the modest savings they had put aside to do that are gone. And what savings haven't been sucked dry by the robber barons are now being attacked by Dalton McGuinty with his 8% tax.

And it doesn't end upon death. These guys, these Liberals, Mr. McGuinty and his gang, have managed to tax everything that moves. And if it doesn't move, they'll kick it till it does move, and then they'll tax it. And even if it dies, they'll tax it again, because that 8% tax is going to apply to funerals.

This is a shameful, shameful tax grab by a government that lined the pockets of the most profitable corporations in this province to the tune of billions. Big banks got the break of their lifetime. Even in these hardest of times, big banks are still reporting huge profits. The insurance industry—the great benefactor of Ontarians and Canadians, I sarcastically note—never one to lose a buck, gets huge tax breaks, and good folks like Jacquelyn Morgan get hit hard. People like Cornelius Duffy: "I worked at the GM plant here in St. Catharines for 30.5 years, retiring in 1994. During my time with the company, a percentage of my wages was diverted to the company pension plan to ensure that when I did retire, there would be an income from that plan." Now you've got governments insisting that GM workers give up more and more and more.

Why won't Mr. McGuinty stand on his feet and tell those million-dollar-a-year guys at GM and Chrysler to quit robbing the piggy bank, to keep their hands in their own pockets, if only for a moment? What an exceptional sight that would be. Where are the corporate brass making the big concessions? They're the, oh, so clever ones who have driven these companies into the dirt, into the ground. Workers just work. They do what they're told. And for me, you'll never find a better worker than a GM or a Ford or a Chrysler worker.

So I have to tell you that New Democrats aren't supporting this budget bill; far from it. And I have to tell

you that I despair, because this government had no plan—has no plan—to deal with the huge job losses from the get-go. They were wishing it away. When they had real chances to save industries and jobs, they walked away from them, like at CanGro. A million or a million and a half bucks would have kept CanGro alive. It would have kept a whole lot of good manufacturing jobs, value-added jobs, wealth-creation jobs, and it also would have kept a whole lot of peach farmers and pear farmers and cherry farmers caring for the land.

This government has turned its back on the workers of this province. It has turned its back on the retirees of this province. This government has turned its back on the farmers of this province.

I say to you that if they could feign or somehow, somewhere, from some thespian source, demonstrate pride, I say shame on them. They've got nothing—the government has nothing; the McGuinty Liberals have nothing—to be proud of.

The folks where I come from are scared, and this government is even scarier. The folks where I come from are fearful, and this government is making them more fearful. And this budget compounds and adds to that fear and despair.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure, if not entertaining, to hear the member from Welland. When he speaks on behalf of his constituents, I think he speaks pretty well for the entire constituency that we, all of us, share.

I have to say to the member from Welland that his people and seniors and low-income people—I have them in my area as well. I speak on their behalf as well, and I have to tell the people in my area that it's not a budget dealing strictly with the blended sales tax. There is a lot more in this budget. It goes well beyond the single blended sales tax. So I think it is unfair in a way to mention one particular aspect.

I have to say that I would rather see a blended sales tax, really blended, and put in the price as the Europeans do, so they know the price they pay. If they like a particular item, they buy it, and if they don't, then they don't—but they know exactly what they are paying for.

But I have to tell you that the situation he has mentioned with respect to seniors or low-income people paying bills and high prices, utilities—the same thing happens to the people in my area.

We also have to mention the good things that are in the budget. I would like to see those things come out as we move the budget laws ahead. The member from Simcoe North didn't mention the farms because he happens to represent an area with respect to issues dealing with farmers. I share his sentiment as well.

But I would say, let's delve into the budget and not mention only one particular item where, yes, they may be affected in the short term or long term; I think we should be dealing with the entire effect of the budget and the many wonderful things that a lot of our people will be benefiting from in the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from Welland mentioned the small contraction that the Premier mentioned not long ago: a small contraction, indeed; a small contraction that led to the largest deficit in Ontario's history and a small contraction that looks like it's going to lead to the bankruptcy of General Motors.

General Motors will probably come back as a smaller manufacturer of automobiles; probably the Chevy and the Cadillac will be their main lines of production. Pontiac and Buick will be gone. If you want to buy a Buick, you probably can in the Orient, but you won't be able to buy one in North America.

Chrysler: a huge question mark as to whether they'll survive or not or whether they will be lopped off—that huge plant in Bramalea, that tremendously efficient plant in Windsor could be gone, all the result of a small contraction.

The budget announcements: Of course, the budget is a huge announcement. It gets lots of press, lots of attention, and there were all kinds of corporate tax cuts mentioned in the budget to restimulate the economy of Ontario. Yet here we have the Budget Measures Act that comes before the House, and that's the act that implements the budget, and that act is absolutely devoid of any corporate tax cuts. It's also absolutely devoid of any spending restraints.

So here we have the government, with all their announcements and all the photo ops, and it's basically business as usual. There are no restraints announced by this government in this bill, and there are no tax cuts announced in this bill.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: There are no corporate tax cuts in this legislation, and it's—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Welland. There was a time when we used to have a lot of time in this place to be able to debate, and you can see that when he tells a couple of stories, the time just flies. And yes, we could use more time to be able to tell more and more stories from all over Ontario, as he did with the stories from Welland-Thorold.

The member from York West talks about there being more things we could talk about other than those little things that affect people in the short term. The harmonized tax of the GST and the PST is here for the long term, and it's going to affect everybody till the long term, till they die. This is here with us forever. This is not short-term; this is long-term, and people are going to work till they drop to be able to pay for this harmonized GST-PST consumption tax. People young and old are going to be consumed by this consumption tax on everything that they purchase, both young and old, and it will be here with us in perpetuity.

1640

Would that we had the time to be able to tell all the stories from every riding across Ontario, because we

would be able to tell you that there is not one Liberal MPP who will stand up and say, "I am proud of the harmonized PST and GST." You don't hear too many of them, not on that side and not on this side, who say, "I am proud of this harmonized tax." They are all afraid of this tax, and they should be. And they should be ashamed, because it's an unfair consumption tax that's going to hit a whole lot of people hard. We should go after Mr. Ignatieff, we should go after Mr. Harper and we should go after the McGuinty government, because they've done this in collusion with each other. This is the wrong tax.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I'm proud to comment on the member of Welland's speech. Let me tell you that I wish that everyone in this House would properly inform Ontarians, especially when it comes down to the seniors. Low-income seniors are going to be benefiting no matter where they live.

Last Tuesday, for example, I was at the Hawkesbury office. A person walked in with a cheque for \$250 that she had just received. She says, "What is this cheque for \$250?" I said, "Madam, if the budget passes, you'll be getting \$500 now." Was she ever happy. It's right there in the budget on page 38. Low-income seniors will be benefiting, and this is why we keep saying that 93% of the people in Ontario will benefit from a tax cut.

Really, as I said, we are going through a recession, and I hope everybody knows about it. What the McGuinty government has done—at this time we are getting ready to get out of the recession, so we are going through a tough period of time. We have to come up with projects that will create jobs: \$32.5 billion worth of projects will be awarded to different companies so we can create the jobs. So really, when we say that people are going to be paying more taxes, 8%, I guess most of the people in the world have accepted that; 130 countries have accepted to have harmonized taxes and—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You see, there he goes again, and that's exactly why Kevin Gaudet has coined this the "BST." That's why Kevin Gaudet has called this the bull spit tax, because the government's relying upon bull spit to sell it to the people of Ontario. I've got to tell you: Jacquelyn Morgan—don't bull spit her. She knows exactly what's going on. That's the letter I just read a little while ago. She's got it down to the final numbers in terms of what this new tax is going to cost her.

You know what? If this government really wanted to do something, it could have incorporated a strong buy-Ontario policy into its budget: There isn't a single penny of public money spent on a provincial project unless there's a minimum amount of 100% buy-Ontario, and only when it's not available in Ontario do you start looking outside the province.

The Minister of Agriculture could have helped a whole lot of grape growers down in the Niagara region

by ensuring that when a bottle of wine has "Ontario wine" on it, it's 100% Ontario grapes.

This government has sat on its hands and abandoned workers, seniors, farmers, grape growers down in Niagara who have watched good grape rotting on the vine. And these farmers then have to go to a bank that's increasingly reluctant to lend them money to finance the next year's grape production.

This government could have gone buy-Ontario; this government could have demanded 100% Ontario grape. Rather, it decided to give the biggest, most profitable corporations \$4 billion in tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 162, the Budget Measures Act, 2009. I thought I would begin by speaking about one of the components that's very important to my constituents in Guelph that has been quite well received. This budget includes a \$32.5-billion investment in infrastructure over the next two years. Of course, infrastructure investment is important in two ways. Number one, obviously, we end up with improved public infrastructure. But secondly, in the short term, it creates jobs locally for the people of Ontario, the sorts of jobs that we need to weather this recession.

A few weeks ago, for one of those particular pieces of that infrastructure investment, \$213 million for GO Transit, some of the details were announced. I was very pleased to be able to announce, with my federal neighbour, Michael Chong, the member of Parliament for Wellington-Halton Hills, a couple of projects that are taking place in what is now his riding but are quite important to the people of Guelph.

The first of those was a \$30-million project to rebuild, to improve the rail bridge over the Credit River east of Georgetown.

Of course, you might reasonably ask, "Why do people in Guelph care about a railway bridge east of Georgetown?" Well, the answer is that that rail line, which belongs to Canadian National, leaves Toronto, travels through Brampton and Georgetown and eventually ends up in Guelph and Kitchener, and the bottleneck on that railway that's preventing us from getting good, consistent, frequent GO service to Guelph is the rail bridge over the Credit River in Georgetown.

So what this \$30-million project will do—\$15 million from the federal government and \$15 million from our Ontario government—is rebuild that bridge; it will widen the bridge. Immediately, it will be double-tracked, but there will be the potential to triple-track it in the future. Why does that matter? Well, the tracks belong to Canadian National, and of course, Canadian National's primary business is freight. While there are GO trains now, obviously, out to Georgetown, they've maxed out the spare capacity that isn't already occupied by freight. In order to get more GO trains, more frequent service on that rail line, what we need is double-tracking and, eventually, for full service, triple-tracking to get us around the

bottlenecks. So that \$30-million investment is going to enable us to improve those tracks and get GO trains to Guelph.

I've got to tell you that one of the highest priorities that the citizens of Guelph have described to me as an MPP is to please get GO train service to Guelph, because a lot of people who live in Guelph commute into the Toronto area, and quite frankly, it would make a whole lot more sense to be commuting on the train than it would be on the 401, which is becoming increasingly congested.

The second GO Transit project is in an area just south of Guelph called Aberfoyle, which used to be in my riding of Guelph-Wellington before the boundaries were redrawn. Aberfoyle is now part of Ted Arnott's riding, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills here, but it used to be part of my riding. This is a \$5.5-million project, again shared equally between the federal and provincial governments. What's going to happen is, there is a park-and-ride GO bus stop in Aberfoyle, and it's going to allow for the building of quite a large GO bus shelter.

1650

If I'm so excited about trains, why am I also excited about GO buses? Well, trains can only go where the tracks go. If you want to get from Guelph to where the tracks don't go, then the GO bus is a really great alternative. About two years ago we started up a new GO bus service. It runs from the University of Guelph and goes to Mississauga. There's a second service that goes from the University of Guelph to York University, back and forth. That has been a huge help to people who, number one, commute to Mississauga to work, and also to students who attend the University of Guelph who are now able to commute back and forth by GO bus.

The second service to York University helps Guelph students who commute to York University, and it helps students from the north end of Toronto who want to get to the University of Guelph, and, of course, it helps commuters who work in the north end of Toronto rather than downtown. So again, a very important service, and we're making an investment that allows that transit to be expanded.

Another one of the infrastructure investments that we announced recently related to the budget has to do with \$1.2 billion that is going to be spent over the next couple of years on social housing and affordable housing. Like very many areas of this province, Guelph is desperately in need of additional social housing and affordable housing. So again, my constituents are very pleased to learn that there will be \$700 million invested across the province in rehabilitating social housing units; \$360 million in developing affordable housing units for low-income seniors and people with disabilities. I know there's some real interest in that sort of housing in my constituency.

One of things that we find in a university town is because the students, of course, are quite happy to live in low-rental housing, it actually drives up the cost of low-rental housing, and that makes it very difficult for seniors

to find affordable low-cost rental housing, for people with disabilities to find low-cost rental housing. So this form of housing is very worthwhile. Another \$175 million is going into the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, and again the focus is on people who are low-income who have disabilities, and low-income seniors. My constituents, for whom housing has been a high priority, find that a very exciting part of the budget.

One of the things that Bill 162 will do is an additional help for low-income families, and that is accelerating the payment of the Ontario child benefit. The Ontario child benefit, as you well know, is paid to children who live in low-income families. It doesn't matter why the family is low-income; it's simply a matter of looking at low income. We know that lots of children living in low-income families are in fact living in working-poor families, and we don't want to discriminate between people living on social assistance or people who are low-income working poor. We want to make sure that the children who are living with those benefits get some help.

The Ontario child benefit, which we introduced a few years ago, is currently set at \$650 per child for people with the lowest income and then, of course, is phased out as people have higher income. It wasn't going to hit the maximum of \$1,100 until 2011, but the people who work in United Way and in social assistance in Guelph are just absolutely thrilled that in this budget we are going to be raising the Ontario child benefit up to \$1,100 effective July 2009—this year. That increase is going to go from \$650 to \$1,100, almost doubling the Ontario child benefit in this budget, and that's very important to my constituents.

Another one of the things that's quite important to my constituents is the whole issue around pensions, and it's one of the things that I've heard a lot of comments about because, of course, most people have pensions. The most common form of pension is a defined contribution pension. I've had a lot of people come to me over the last few years and say, "The rules around how you can access that pot of money that you've contributed to are far too restrictive. I, as a pensioner, contributed to this money. Why are you, as a government, restricting our access to that money?" So one of the things we've done is that we listened to those people, and we will be freeing up the rules on how that can be accessed.

One of the reforms we are proposing in this budget is that Ontario pensioners who have chosen to put money into LIFs, life income funds, would be able to unlock up to 50%. That's doubling the amount that they can unlock at one time over the current rules. In addition, there is a financial hardship clause in that particular pension legislation. We're providing a two-year waiver of fees for financial hardship, because we understand that in this economic climate there are many pensioners who have been struggling.

Another area that has been of particular concern in my riding is the whole issue of defined benefit pension plans and what happens when there is an issue with their

solvency. Under the pension rules as they currently exist, the company is required to top up the fund to make sure that it is fully solvent. Of course, as you can imagine, in my community one of the biggest defined benefit pension funds is the University of Guelph pension fund. According to the pension rules, it is not fully solvent, and the people who are members of that pension know that. The University of Guelph is being required to top up the pension fund to bring it up to full solvency. Again, in these economic times, because their investments have gone down—not surprisingly; just as everyone else's have—they're finding it a great hardship to try to meet that solvency, full-funding requirement in the five-year period which the current legislation prescribes.

The legislation that we are proposing around this budget will actually extend the period for the solvency top-up from five years to 10 years, provided that two thirds of the members of that fund agree to the extension of the top-up. They'll need to be given full information about the health of the fund, the financial situation. These are both the active contributing members and also the retirees, who in this instance are treated as members. If two thirds of those people agree, then it can be extended. I know from talking to the union representatives at the University of Guelph and the representative of the retirees' association at the University of Guelph that they're both quite supportive and, in fact, have been asking us to extend from the five-year period to the 10-year period. So that is quite good news for my constituents who are concerned about what's going to happen with the funding of their pension fund.

In addition to that, we are also looking at some other initiatives around the general area of pensions, looking at simplifying and clarifying pension rules related to marriage breakdown, permitting plans to offer phased retirement and establishing a pension reform advisory council. I know that a number of the members who have spoken this afternoon have talked about the fact that one of the things that we do need to do is to have a look at how we are going to manage pensions, which are obviously of concern during this economic time to a lot of people. We will be looking at doing that.

1700

I must note, as many other speakers have in one way or another, that one of the things in the budget is a very comprehensive tax reform package that would move Ontario to the same situation as, I believe, 130 other countries and about four other provinces that have already moved to a harmonized GST/PST. We will be, with the budget approval, moving to phasing in a harmonized single sales tax.

I think it's important for us to understand that, when you move from the current provincial sales tax model to the federal GST model, one of the advantages for businesses is that they get a rebate on the tax they pay on their inputs. The significance of this is, of course, that that makes the cost of doing business in Ontario lower than it is right now. That's really important because we understand that we're in a recession. We understand that

what we need to get out of that recession as the world economy turns around, which it eventually will, is to attract international investment to create new jobs in Ontario. If we're going to do that, we need to have investors attracted to Ontario. In order to do that, we are moving to a single sales tax. We're also reducing our business taxes in addition to just the harmonizing of the tax.

We know that means, because we're moving to a different tax structure, that things that are not currently taxable will become taxable. We understand that. This is not something that's necessarily a politically popular move; it's something that's necessary in this economic climate.

We also know that it's necessary to help the individuals who are going to be dealing with this new sales tax, so we have done three things to help individual Ontarians. Number one, we've introduced a permanent cut in personal income tax from which people at the lowest end of the income scale will reap the greatest benefit. About 93% of Ontarians will see a cut in their personal income tax. We've also introduced a permanent sales tax credit, which people in low- and middle-income-tax-bracket families will benefit from. At the highest end, every man, woman and child in a low-income family will get a \$260 tax credit. So if you had mom, dad and two kids, you would have over a \$1,000 tax credit. That's permanent. There's also a transitional credit in the year in which we introduce that single sales tax so that all families making under \$160,000 will receive a \$1,000 credit in that transition year, and all singles making under \$80,000 will receive a \$300 tax benefit.

I think this is a very good budget, and I am very pleased to support it. I will be sharing my time with the member from Brant.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Brant.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Levac: I can explain the entire thing in two minutes. No.

I do want to make a couple of points that I don't think have been brought up since this time, and that is the state Ontario was in when the first retail sales tax was implemented in 1961. In 1961, we were almost a closed economy, meaning that most of the economic development was done inside of the province of Ontario. Subsequent to that time, we've seen an extreme explosion of exports and a world market. Between 1961 and now, we have to understand that there has to be and had to be an evolution of the retail sales tax.

In between that time, we also saw the introduction of the GST. When you see the introduction of the GST, exports and the economy changing, and also the chain of how the product gets to market and to the retail position, it was an extremely changed way in which the economy was running. We still relied on the RST, as it was called back in 1961, so that the provincial sales tax and the GST in harmony, which 130 countries have gone to, makes an awful lot of sense to convert to to prepare us for the exit.

One of the things that we need to talk about here is the balance that needs to be applied to the discussions that we're having. Everybody else has been able to pick one piece and say, "That's the awful thing that's happened with this budget and we are going to go down the tubes because of it." Quite frankly, if we're not preparing ourselves to exit the recession, once we start moving up into the competitive edge piece, we are going to be doing things that are not setting the table for the improvements that are going to happen as a result of moving from a tax system that was established in 1961 to using it in the 21st century. I'm very much in support of a harmonized tax system to prepare us for the exit, once we get out of this mess and are being competitive on the world market. So I just wanted to add that to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The previous speaker said he could talk about the budget in two minutes. I can give him two words: tax hike.

I'm going to read into the record several pieces of correspondence from the people of Nepean—Carleton.

"As a husband and father of a family of three who has been laid off twice in four years, I cannot stress enough how out of touch and senseless the tax strategy of Dalton McGuinty is for the majority of Ontarians."

Another: "Although touted as a benefit to business, it is unlikely to have that effect. Although it will reduce the required paperwork, sales are sure to decline."

Another: "The planned McGuinty tax grab of combined PST/GST is disgusting given the financial constraints already being endured by taxpayers due to the recession."

"Dear Lisa MacLeod....

"I am writing to strongly object to the proposed implementation of the Ontario harmonized sales tax."

"Sir,

"I have hardly enough money to pay for my basic needs now. How is raising taxes going to help me and the rest of the province who are struggling now? No to HST. Keep your \$1,000 bribes. The McGuinty Liberals are abusing their majority and not listening to the citizens of Ontario. Overwhelmingly, we do not want this. Shame on you, McGuinty, to add more burden to hard-working Ontarians in this toughest economic time."

Another: "I am writing this note to voice my opposition to your plan to harmonize the PST and GST. Over the years, we seniors have paid our share of taxes."

Another: "I hope that I am contacting the correct person to help me fight the proposed harmonized tax....

"We do not buy daily coffees.

"We do not eat out regularly.

"My heat in the house sits at 18 for the majority of the winter. I do not use my dryer. All appliances are energy-efficient. I do not use my dishwasher. My light bulbs are all low-wattage. I carpool to work and back. If you can figure out a way to find me more living monies, I would welcome your suggestions."

"We would like to add our voices to already very strong and determined opposition"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have just witnessed one of the most incredible abuses of parliamentary power that has taken place in the 21 years that I've been around here. The government has just served on us notices of motion indicating that it's going to stop debate on this bill; that it's going to allow only one day, but a few hours, of public hearings; and that it's going to force clause-by-clause to be completed in yet another few hours on the second day of committee hearings. People will not be allowed to publicly comment on this bill in the hearing process. The government will hand-pick the people who attend at that committee. Then, third reading, on a bill that is as controversial as any that has hit the floor of this House and that affects every single Ontarian, will be restricted to but one hour: 20 minutes per caucus, and maybe five minutes if the independent member wants to join in.

This is a disgusting demonstration of the tyranny of the majority. Shame on every one of you Liberal backbenchers who haven't got the guts or the gonads or the backbone to stand up and simply tell their Premier that this is wrong; it's wrong; it's wrong. Don't tell me that this is why you entered political life. Don't tell me that this is why you're proud to be here in this Parliament, because you're part of a government that's imposing some of the most detested legislation on the people of Ontario and denying parliamentarians their obligation to debate it fully. Shame on you.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Let me tell you some of the reasons that I entered public life, some of those reasons that resonate in this budget. This is a budget that's going to provide low- and middle-income families with up to \$1,100 annually per child, starting this summer, almost doubling the \$600 that they receive now. That's going to expand eligibility to more than 115,000 more families in the city that I come from, in Mississauga, where our fastest-growing demographic is seniors. The Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant—this is a thing that's going to help seniors who may be on fixed incomes, living on pensions, stay in their homes longer. That's the thing that they want to do. That's the thing that we want them to do. That's going to increase to more than \$500 in support for their property taxes starting in 2010, and it's going to help more than 600,000 more seniors in the next five years.

The Ontario property and sales tax credits ensure that senior couples who receive the guaranteed minimum level of income from governments will receive the full benefit from all of these credits. Seniors and other Ontarians are going to have more flexibility in accessing the funds in their locked-in accounts by increasing those limits.

A lot of the debate here is focused on the move to a single sales tax. Some people have called this, to use their own expression, "a tax grab," but it's not. If it were a tax grab, Ontario would be getting more money through the implementation of a single sales tax, but it's not. The province is actually going to lose money on it. So by definition, how can this be a tax grab? This is nonsense. It's fascinating to hear some of the Ontario PCs who are at odds with the present finance minister, at odds with the former finance minister and at odds with their own former leader. This is a good budget; let's pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: There are a couple of things that I want to mention. First of all, to hear that the closure motion is coming in is rather concerning. This is a major tax restructuring in the province of Ontario. To go back to the member from Brant's discussion about 1961, the RST at that time, this is a major movement and I think there needs to be a full debate on it. I am disappointed to hear that we would bring in closure on it with only one day of hearings and not have an ability to talk about the impact.

The one thing I wanted to say about this is that part of it is I don't think the spin doctors—they've done a good job, to some sense. There's a lot of people in opposition to it. But the reality from what I'm seeing is that we're moving from a manufacturing-based economy in the province of Ontario. When you move from that, it's great to make it sound like we're giving tax concessions, or perceived tax concessions, in those areas, but if you don't have that base to draw from, the income from that is lost substantially. As we move to a service-based economy, you have to recoup those funds that are going to be lost in that, and that's what the HST taps into—those other service-based activities that are out there which will generate funds in the province in the long term. I think, from my perspective, what's happening here in the province of Ontario is that we're moving from the manufacturing-based economy whereby the income was generated in the form of taxation to the government of the day to a service-based economy, and there will be a substantial amount of loss in revenues to the province of Ontario. Once fully implemented, acting and moving forward—what's taking place is that they're more or less, in my opinion, almost saying, "Yeah, we're not going to have a manufacturing base; we're going to a service-based to economy."

But if it's such a saving, what's happening and why wasn't there a reduction in the actual amount, 8% and 5% to 13%—why wasn't there a reduced amount if there's going to be such a savings? On that note, they talk about the loss; what's going to happen with the employees that handle the PST—guess where? Right in Oshawa. We have hundreds of those individuals working in Oshawa taking care of those accounts on a regular basis. In this economy and tax structure, what's happening in our community of Oshawa? We get another hit again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Guelph has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to my colleague from Brant, who wrapped up so eloquently talking about the fact that what we really need to make sure of, as we come out of this recession, as we exit, is that we have a competitive economy, and that's the reason for this tax reform package.

I must point out, the member from Nepean–Carleton, who tried to characterize this as a tax hike: In fact, that's not our projection at all. When we look at the cuts in corporate income tax and the fact that we're no longer double-taxing a number of manufactured goods and that we're cutting personal income taxes as well, what we expect when this all nets out and is fully implemented is that we will have a net revenue loss of \$2.3 billion a year. We are not doing this so that the Ontario government will have more tax revenue. We are doing it so more Ontarians can have jobs.

A lot of the budget is focused on ways to help people in poverty because one of our primary agendas has been how to address poverty. I would just like to go over a number of things that will help people at the low end of the income scale. We're raising the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 immediately, if we can get this bill passed—and it's this bill that we need to get passed to raise the Ontario child benefit. We are investing in affordable social housing. We're lowering the personal income tax permanently. We are creating a permanent sales tax credit. There are additional property tax credits for seniors. There are a number of initiatives here which will help the low-income folks of Ontario.

I am very proud of this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak on Bill 162 and, more generally, on the 2009 provincial budget.

Ontario has long been known as the economic engine of Canada. Ontario was a place of prosperity, a place of vast employment opportunities, and a unique environment to raise our family. Then on April 1, 2009, the Liberals handed us a terrible April Fool's joke: The Ontario that we have known officially became a have-not province. Ontario now stands in line to receive handouts from Ottawa. No longer are we the economic engine of Canada; we are now the caboose. What a terrible joke.

In 2004, Ontario was Canada's leading manufacturing province, accounting for 52% of the total national manufacturing shipments. Now we wake up to daily newspaper reports that yet another manufacturer is going out of business, more layoffs are imminent, and more families are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. Ontario has lost almost 120,000 jobs this year alone and almost 240,000 since Premier McGuinty and the Liberals came to power.

This province needs a plan to bring Ontario back to prosperity, and I can tell you, it is not in Bill 162.

With three weeks to go before bringing down their budget, the McGuinty Liberals announced that they would put Ontario into an \$18-billion hole. What makes the two-year, \$18-billion deficit so extraordinary is not

the amount or the fact that Ontario is going into deficit at all; it's that while in office, Dalton McGuinty hiked Ontarians' taxes and went on a spending spree—a \$27-billion spending spree, to be exact. In six years, the McGuinty Liberals spent \$27 billion, and now they're going to spend \$18 billion more. That will be \$45 billion Dalton McGuinty will have spent over the course of eight years. To put \$45 billion into perspective, it is enough to give every man, woman and child an extra \$75 every week for a year. Think of what you could do with that money. You could put it toward the higher cost of your groceries, or perhaps you could use it to pay for your rising property taxes. The McGuinty Liberals did not save any of this \$45 billion for a rainy day or, in this case, a recession. Instead they spent and they spent and they spent.

The question is, how did they spend the money? Well, last year the Ministry of Education, under Kathleen Wynne, spent \$3.5 million on hotels across the province. That same year, the Liberals' Minister of Government Services spent over \$100,000 at the Royal York hotel, one of the most luxurious hotels in Canada. This sort of spending by the McGuinty Liberals only scratches the surface. Sadly, it's no coincidence. Ministers like Wynne have increased their spending on travelling and hotel rooms steadily over the past few years, even as the Progressive Conservative Party warned of the economic crisis.

1720

Three weeks after a projected deficit was announced, the Liberal government officially unveiled their economic plan for Ontario. Their plan includes a 13% sales tax grab for these vulnerable families who have lost their jobs, a 13% sales tax grab for seniors who struggle to get by on a limited income and a 13% sales tax grab for students paying tuition and living on their own: a 13% McGuinty sales tax grab for all of Ontario. This historic tax grab is hitting Ontario families at the worst time, when they can least afford it. Instead of focusing on creating new jobs and a new path for Ontario, Premier McGuinty and his government are focusing on creating new taxes for Ontarians. Now, when the wallets of Ontarians are being stretched thin, Premier McGuinty is asking to stretch them a bit further, to pay more for goods and services that otherwise would be PST exempt.

I want to share with you an excerpt from a commentary in the Ontario division of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's magazine:

"Mr. McGuinty has a terrible track record on taxes. He has promised not once but twice, without ambiguity, that he would not raise taxes. Taxpayers are understandably wary because, it has turned out, Mr. McGuinty has repeatedly lied to them....

"After his first 'no new taxes' election campaign promise, he proceeded to hike business taxes and impose a new so-called 'health tax'—the single largest tax hike in Ontario history.... Since his second election campaign, which also featured another 'no new taxes' promise, he has put in place a paint tax, an electronics tax and a new

tire tax. As well, his Green Energy Act has a new energy tax and a home-sale-audit fee. And there's more. The recently tabled budget raises taxes for the top two tax brackets by lowering the threshold on which they apply, amounting to a large tax grab" from middle Ontario.

"The economy is still struggling; people are worried about their jobs and are spending less. Now is the wrong time to add 8% to the costs of gasoline, diesel, propane, home heating fuel, home electricity, natural gas, home TV service, home Internet service, home phone service, cell phone charges, hair cuts, lawyers' fees, accountants' fees, mechanics' fees, ballet lessons, rink rental fees, tailoring, magazine subscriptions, mutual fund fees, massage, chiropractic, audiology, train fares, plane fares, taxi fares, bus fares, vitamins, dry-cleaning, grass cutting, snow removal, camping fees, firewood, meals under \$4, new homes over \$500,000, gym fees, home renovation labour and real Christmas trees.

"These newly taxed services will importantly increase the cost of living for individuals and families in Ontario. Mr. McGuinty will pay families \$1,000 to offset the new costs. There will also be a new low-income tax credit created. The 'McGuinty Bucks' \$1,000 cash is one-time, likely won't cover the tax hikes and appears politically motivated...."

That could not have expressed more clearly the sentiments of families across Ontario. Residents of Ontario have come out hard and strong against the McGuinty tax grab. I've had the opportunity to speak to many of my constituents and have received hundreds of e-mails from citizens across Ontario who are outraged at this blatant tax grab. One resident said, "If there was ever a bad time, this is probably the worst. People are struggling to make ends meet. And you know, there's a realization that things aren't going to get better for quite a while and nickel-and-dime people to death, so to speak, isn't a very respectful way to deal with your constituents."

Premier McGuinty claims this tax grab will benefit businesses across the province. I'd like to share an e-mail I received from a business owner in my riding:

"I am a small business owner here in Orangeville. People need to know the huge amount of cash that our Premier is asking for with this tax change.

"At present, as a 'reseller,' we are PST exempt under Ontario tax law. This will no longer be the case with the Premier's proposal. Therefore, the product that we supply to our customer will accumulate the following provincial tax: The manufacturer will pay 8% PST on materials, our company will pay 8% PST to the manufacturer, and our customer will pay 8% PST to us. Our Premier will have collected 24% additional tax on this item."

Premier McGuinty is raising taxes on essential items for Ontarians. Families still need to put gas in their cars, heat their homes, power their appliances, use the telephone, get haircuts, and eventually, they will need a funeral service. Families are finding it unfathomable that the Premier would saddle them with an 8% increase in taxes during this troubled economy.

What about the activities parents enjoy providing for their children? The government has been advocating for a

healthier lifestyle for men, women and children, yet they are going to impose their tax grab on groups like the minor hockey associations. I received an e-mail from the representative within the Orangeville Minor Hockey Association located in my riding. It says:

"I wanted to make sure you were aware of the severe impact that the new harmonized sales tax will have on the operations of Orangeville minor hockey. Orangeville minor hockey has a total operating budget of about \$850,000. Of this, \$500,000 is the expense of renting ice. Presently, this expense is only subject to the 5% GST, but once the HST is in place a further 8% will be added for a total tax rate of 13%."

This means that Orangeville minor hockey will have to collect from parents or fundraise in the community, all for a McGuinty sales tax hike of \$40,000.

"Orangeville minor hockey is a volunteer organization that provides a healthy and constructive environment for over 1,200 local youth. It seems unwise to so significantly impact an organization like this. The federal government recently introduced the child fitness tax credit to help promote an active lifestyle for youth. The province never matched this tax credit. Instead"—the McGuinty Liberals appear—"to be moving in the opposite direction by making youth sports even less affordable and accessible for families."

This is not the only activity or part of the province where parents will see their kids' athletic activities suffer because of the McGuinty tax grab. Families in Windsor will pay \$31 more for co-ed hockey; a family swimming pass in Oakville will cost \$76 more; to join the rowing program in Guelph will cost an extra \$52; and for girls to play hockey in North Bay, that will cost them \$55 more.

So not only will the cost of these activities go up; the fuel to put into your car to get them there will go up as well. Travelling to games, practices and tournaments will become tougher and tougher for the lower- to middle-class families who will be most affected by the tax grab.

Even adults who want to keep in shape will fall victim to this tax grab as well, as gym memberships will now be subjected to the blended tax. One of my constituents wrote me, saying, "Aren't we supposed to be trying to battle childhood obesity? Does McGuinty not care about the health of future generations or the social fabric that binds communities and therefore our province?"

And what about some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens? The blind will suffer at the hand of Dalton McGuinty as their audio books will now be subjected to the sales tax grab.

The last thing seniors need is an additional tax burden, especially where a lot of them exist on fixed incomes.

An analysis by Wernham Wealth Management found "that the impact of this Liberal budget will be more costly for Ontario seniors than anyone has reported." The new cost to seniors of the McGuinty sales tax grab is estimated at more than \$1,500 a year; \$1,500 is a hefty sum of money for any Ontarian, especially seniors living on a fixed income.

The analysis looked at what new costs would be incurred by the typical retired couple receiving an after-

tax income of \$41,400 a year with Dalton McGuinty's new tax grab. By looking at the added costs on daily items, such as heating oil, Internet services, haircuts and Tim Hortons coffee, the net increased tax hit on this couple would be over \$1,500 each year.

What about the dead? Well, Premier McGuinty has found a way to tax them too. The McGuinty Liberals have found the way to do the unthinkable, the unimaginable and the inconceivable by taxing funeral services. Starting Canada Day 2010, when you arrange a funeral for your loved one, you will pay 13% tax. A funeral service and burial here in Ontario runs around \$10,000, and now the Liberal government is asking the deceased and their grieving families to dig a little deeper when planning a final goodbye. Lawyer fees to administer last will and testaments will be subjected to the McGuinty tax. Families using accountants to settle the estates will also be subjected to the new McGuinty tax. This new tax will also be charged on floral arrangements, catering and other funeral-related costs. This McGuinty tax will affect seniors, students, families, low-income Ontarians. Everyone in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario will pay more. And now for the dead. How far will this Premier and his government go to tax the most vulnerable people in Ontario? Apparently, to the very end.

1730

But according to Premier McGuinty and his Liberal government, they're going to put the money back into the pockets of Ontarians. Yes, a financial bribe from the Liberal government. Families making less than \$160,000 per year will receive three equal payments totalling \$1,000, with the last payment ironically set to arrive in mailboxes across the province right before the next provincial election in 2011. Singles who make less than \$80,000 per year will receive three equal payments of—wait for it—\$300. But Ontarians are not blind. They know a bribe when they see one coming. They understand that this payment is for one time only. The McGuinty tax grab is forever.

Here's what some of my constituents have said about the Liberal government bribe: "Refunds for just about everyone in the province. What a waste. Collect more tax than you need and then pay it back. That's an inefficient way to run a government."

Another one: "I have hardly enough money to pay for my basic needs now. How is raising taxes going to help me and the rest of the province who are struggling now? No to HST! Keep your \$1,000 bribe. The McGuinty Liberals are abusing their majority and not listening to the citizens of Ontario. Overwhelmingly, we do not want this. Shame on you, McGuinty, to add more burden to hard-working Ontarians in this tough economic time."

Another one: "In an attempt to soften the blow of this tax, Mr. McGuinty's pledge to forward—in three payments—\$1,000 to households who earn less than \$160,000 annually is nothing but a bribe of one's own money, given the third and final cheque will go out just before the next provincial election in 2011. As Ontario taxpayers, we haven't forgotten about the \$900 we lose each and every year to the so-called health tax."

As you can see, my constituents oppose this. I would like to ask Premier McGuinty what his own constituents in Ottawa South think of his blatant tax grab, but the beauty of e-mail shows that I don't have to ask him. I can read from an e-mail that I received: "Please, don't tell me it's for my own good. Premier McGuinty has failed to make any specific case or compelling argument as to why a tax hike...."

Another quote: "Leave the money in my pocket! You plan to give some of us some of our money back in three one-time instalments?! Exempting diapers, baby food and tampons?! How noble!

"I literally have no disposable income left at the end of the month. And not because I don't make a decent wage or spend like crazy but because after paying mortgage, heat, hydro, condo fees, municipal taxes, a car payment, gas, insurance, phone, Internet, food and then I have to pay down my debt."

Premier McGuinty, what do you have to say to your own constituents who are against your government's budget?

As Ontarians tighten their belts and pinch their pennies, bloated government salaries continue to grow. It proves again that the McGuinty Liberals have no clue when it comes to the everyday challenges facing families and businesses in Ontario.

As Premier McGuinty promised in this budget, public sector hiring will decrease. Yes, we see that last year over 53,000 government employees earned over \$100,000 per year. Meanwhile, 300,000 Ontarians have lost their manufacturing jobs in the private sector, with 134,000 more manufacturing job losses expected this year. With many Ontarians losing their jobs in 2008, Premier McGuinty's office was still hiring. The number of Premier's office staff grew during the 2008 calendar year from 55 to 73 staffers, a 33% increase. This includes a record staff of 15 communications officers to act as the Premier's spin doctors.

Speaking of raises, Premier McGuinty has also awarded Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. executives with healthy bonuses and pay raises even though they've been under extreme fire as of late. This is an agency that has been called on the carpet for insider fraud and spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on a marketing exercise to remove one letter from their logo. Since Dalton McGuinty took office, salaries and bonuses at the OLG have nearly doubled. Is this what we call accountability?

This is the wrong budget at the wrong time for Ontario. Regrettably, we see that this Premier is out of touch with the needs of Ontario families. His latest tax grab will hurt students, seniors, families, low-income Ontarians, small businesses, the unemployed and Ontarians on a fixed income.

Dalton McGuinty has broken promise after promise to not raise taxes in Ontario. The only thing Dalton McGuinty has always delivered on is higher taxes, and this is one item from the budget that you know he will keep.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say how much of a pleasure it is to every now and then find some common ground with the Tories.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: You always do.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's not true. Every now and then we find common ground with the Tories, and the common ground is our attack on this government vis-à-vis their desire to harmonize the GST and PST. Do you know what we also have in common? We, together, are fighting Ignatieff at the federal level—your learned federal Liberal leader. We're attacking him as well, aren't we? We're also attacking Harper together with the Tories. We are so close on this because for quite some time the Tories and the NDP were going after Flaherty and Harper on a regular, consistent, hard basis because they did this behind the scenes. They colluded together on the quiet, colluded together with strong bonds—federal, provincial Liberals, federal Tories, with the provincial Liberals together, and we found common ground. I love that. It is so beautiful when we work together to attack the Liberals on something that is going to affect young men, older men, young women, old women and old men. Everyone is going to be affected and whacked until they die with a harmonized tax that they're never going to be able to escape, not even in death, because when you go to the funeral home, you're going to get taxed and whacked again.

You've got to understand how the Liberals work. They don't even let those who die have some peace. They've got to get taxed even then. The Liberals go after everyone, alive and dead. It's just not right.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's very hard to follow my colleague Rosario Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Try.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Even if I tried, I couldn't do it, Rosario.

Sylvia Jones, the member from Dufferin-Caledon, comes from the wealthiest area and the safest area in Canada—or is it Ontario?—and I have to congratulate the member from Dufferin-Caledon. The budget is so wide and so deep that picking on one particular issue does not make justice, with all due respect. In the minute and a half that I have, let me just say a couple of very important points because these are people from throughout Ontario, all ridings—my riding, her riding and everybody else's riding.

Just with the last budget, the child benefit program—just one particular item—goes from \$600 to \$1,100 a year per child. We didn't have this before.

We have renovated 50,000 social housing units in the last couple of years, and more are coming. This is part of the budget. Building another 4,500 units of assisted housing: This is part of \$1.2 billion which we are sharing with the feds. Over the last three years as well, and part of this particular budget, are \$350 million for repairing and making housing more efficient as well. It's all because of the last budget.

My seniors will be happy. They are getting \$250, and \$500 next year, and I don't think I have too many seniors who make more than \$35,000 a year. I don't think I have very many.

We have created the permanent rent bank now to assist some 15,500 renters in our area.

These are all—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

1740

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a pleasure to make some comments on the speech by the member from Dufferin-Caledon.

The member from York West was just speaking, highlighting some aspects of the budget. One of the positive aspects is the planned reduction in corporate and small business taxes. However, I do question the timing and the fact that those reductions won't actually happen within this financial year. They're going to be in next year's budget, so why they are even featured when they don't happen now, when we need them, when we're in the midst of a recession, is a good question for the government members.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon was highlighting the McGuinty sales tax and talking about all the feedback she's had on that. I've had a lot as well. This tax is now going to apply to hamburgers, haircuts and heating oil. For a rural area like Parry Sound-Muskoka, the concern is that it will also apply to gasoline. Of course, we all rely on automobiles in rural Ontario.

The week after Easter, back in the riding, I had the pleasure of attending a public meeting to do with reliability of hydro. One of the questions that came out of that meeting was, would this new McGuinty sales tax apply to electricity? The answer is yes, it will. I think a lot of people aren't aware that it's going to apply to basic things like electricity. Your heating bill, whether it's oil or electricity or both, will be up 8% when this comes into effect.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon was talking about sports and reading some e-mails. Just last week I met with Fyonna Vanderwerf and Kim Ball from Bracebridge sports and recreation. They were coming to see me because they're trying to encourage the government to bring in some tax credits to encourage participation and a healthier lifestyle in this province. They asked me whether this new tax was going to apply to the fees on things that the town operates, and the answer, of course, is yes, it will. So it's going to be working the other way and making it more expensive to participate in sports in town.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm still concerned about the fact that the government is going to kill debate on this important piece of legislation. It's important because it affects so many people in so many different ways. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of people who were expecting to be able to participate in the public hearings. The door has been slammed in their face.

This is not a responsible way for a majority government to take a bill through process. There are historic and valid reasons for having second and third reading debates. There are historic and valid reasons for having public hearings.

This bill is what public hearings were designed for. It's a bill that contains some very controversial proposals, including a new 8% tax on a whole lot of consumer goods. It fails to address the protection of pensions, and it fails to provide any real jobs strategy. I'm just so disappointed.

But there is yet one thing. I feel compelled—I have to correct my record. I was amazed when I checked with Hansard and discovered that when I was referring to initialisms, I had said “initialization,” in contrast to acronyms. And I tell you, the member—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —for Mississauga—Streetsville, who is a computer nerd, and I say that in a kind way, exposes—

Mr. Dave Levac: Oh, I'm not sure.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, he is; he's a computer nerd. He wouldn't deny it. He points out that initializing is like formatting a disc, and I don't want to know any more, right? I'm too young to be told any more about that nasty process, formatting discs and initializing.

So I correct the record. I researched acronyms and initialism, the subject, a couple of weeks ago, and, as I say, I checked with Hansard, because I couldn't believe that I said “initialization,” but I did. It was an inadvertent slip of the tongue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Dufferin—Caledon has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to thank the members for Trinity—Spadina, York West, Parry Sound—Muskoka and Welland for their feedback, most particularly Trinity—Spadina. I know that he was having some fun with the fact that we had found some common ground, but the reality is that the reason we have found some common ground is because we're actually listening to our constituents.

We've just spent a week back in the ridings—most of us, hopefully. I've had two home shows in the last month since this budget was introduced, and I can tell you, without a doubt, that the thing that is concerning the vast majority of people, the issue that people want to ask me questions on and figure out how they can get the government to respond and to listen to them on, is, “How do we get them to back off on the harmonization?” I know that I and many members of the Progressive Conservative Party have been getting signatures by the hundreds from residents, homeowners, businesspeople, seniors, all signing a petition opposed to the harmonized sales tax. They would like the government to respond. They would like the government to start actually consulting and listening to the residents of Ontario.

So my urge at this point, in closing the debate on this section of the provincial budget, is to say, let's actually

start doing what we're supposed to be doing here as legislators: go back to our ridings, listen to the people who are most affected by the legislation that we are passing, and react to it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on second reading of Bill 162, an Act respecting the budget measures and other matters.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Madam Speaker, we'd like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: There's a small little saying that's quite interesting. It says, “The only limits are, as always, those of vision.” It's James Broughton. “The only limits are, as always, those of vision.”

Mr. Mario Sergio: Who said that?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: James Broughton, who's an American playwright and author.

We have a budget with a vision, and I have a question, I guess, for the members of the opposition: What would you do if you were in power? What would you do if you could write the budget? What plans would you bring forward to try to make Ontario more competitive and survive through what has been, probably, the toughest recession or depression in the last 80 years? Would you do what the NDP did when they had a recession back in the early 1990s, and that is impose a social contract, fight with the unions and create all sorts of other problems—having Rae days, which didn't really resolve the problems of the day? Or would you do what the Conservatives did: fire 8,000 nurses and say that they were useless; close all sorts of hospitals—I believe it was 30 hospitals—and continue an ongoing battle, for the entire time that the Conservatives were in power, with teachers and with nurses and with the public service?

I don't think that's the way we want to go here, today, in 2009. Times have changed. We need to look forward. We are working, with this budget, with the federal government, but not just the federal government; we're also working with other governments—the United States, for example, where a lot of this started. They have admitted their mistakes, that their financial sector was not, perhaps, as regulated as it should have been. Everyone knows what Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are, and other people like Bernie Madoff and AIG. The list goes on and on. So they didn't have a very well regulated financial sector, and the roof fell in. When it did, the United States, with the world's largest economy, impacted other countries, whether it be in Europe, the Far East or just north of them, here in Canada.

We had a number of options when that happened. One of them, for sure, was to do nothing, and perhaps the opposition wanted that: just for us to sit back, do nothing and wait this thing out. But if we'd gone in that direction, we would have been in a deeper hole than ever. We had to find a way to change the way we do things here in Ontario so that people are able to get jobs, are able to

work, are able to put food on the table, are able to continue to live their lives the way that they have with as much normalcy as possible. In this budget, we do that.

1750

We can get into particulars, we can get into arguments, and talk about things and say, "This is really bad. We're spending money here. We're taxing those people there." But in the end, if I'm not mistaken, 93% of Ontarians will receive a tax break. I don't know how loudly I need to say that, because that seems to get drowned out by other things. So I'll say it again: 93% of Ontarians will—

Mr. Mike Colle: And 93% of the people in Scarborough.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: And 93% of the people in Scarborough, 93% of the people in Mississauga, 93% of the people in York West—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Everywhere.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: —in all parts of Ontario, will get a tax break; not a tax increase. People see the harmonization and they think taxes are going to go up. There are so many exemptions and money that's being given back. The government is not making money from this.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So why are you doing this?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: We are doing this to make small business more efficient. Small business is the backbone of Ontario's economy. We're not afraid to make these changes. Yes, it's controversial. But now there are rumblings out in British Columbia, out in—

Mr. Mike Colle: Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: —Prince Edward Island, to do the same thing, to harmonize their taxes. They know that the provinces on the east coast and elsewhere that have already done this have benefited and have improved, and they know that it is a good thing to do. We know that as well. We're not stupid. We want to move forward, and we want to bring forward a modern tax system that will benefit as many Ontarians as possible. When you create successful small businesses, you hire people and you put them to work. When you have that opportunity, people don't have to be unemployed. They have opportunities to work in different sectors once those sectors become available.

We do a lot in this budget—and it's hard to sit and only talk for 10 or 15 minutes about it. We are working in co-operation with the federal government, in co-operation with the international community. We're not doing this alone.

Look at the Chrysler situation and the auto situation. We are working together to solve the GM and the Chrysler situation. We're on the same page as the federal government and Mr. Clement, and on the same page as President Obama. We know that GM is very, very important, especially here in Ontario. We don't want to see GM go down. We don't want to see Chrysler go down. So we're working with them in this budget to ensure that they stay in business. The spinoffs from the auto industry in Ontario are enormous, and we know that

if we lose those jobs, the impact on all other sorts of businesses will be unprecedented. So we are working on that. You can look in tonight's newspaper, you can look in tomorrow's newspaper, and see that we are in contact with the people at Chrysler and GM, just like the federal government is and just like the United States government is, to create partnerships and new ways of doing business with them in the most successful and the least harmful way for all concerned.

We've also undertaken a massive infrastructure program, and I don't know how someone can argue against that. The infrastructure in Toronto, in Ontario, needs to be repaired. By creating projects throughout Ontario which will create new roads, new transit systems, new bridges and all sorts of other new infrastructure, people end up working. This means we hire planners, we hire architects, we hire engineers and we hire all sorts of other specialists, right down to bricklayers and those who will be tunnelling the at least 11-kilometre hole that will house the new Eglinton rapid transit system from Laird Drive all the way westward to Keele. It requires a tremendous amount of work, and it's actually partly a made-in-Canada project. I believe the machinery that's being used is Canadian machinery.

We know that people will get jobs from this. In fact, it's estimated that just the Eglinton line alone will create 46,000 jobs. That fits the Air Canada Centre almost three times, if you can imagine the Air Canada Centre or perhaps the SkyDome being almost full of people working instead of being unemployed, just from one project. That's the Eglinton rapid transit line.

In my own riding of Scarborough Southwest, we're rebuilding the light rapid transit line which runs from Kennedy station all the way up, presently, to the Scarborough Town Centre and just beyond it. In fact, the plan is to go north of the 401 and into the northeast part of Scarborough known as Malvern, which is in the riding of my good colleague Mr. Balkissoon.

It's time to do this. For years, city politicians have clamoured here in Toronto and Scarborough, wanting money from the NDP government and the former Conservative government to fix this line. It breaks down a lot. Every winter, it breaks down. But the NDP didn't do it, and neither did the Conservatives. We have committed in our budget right here to doing that as one of many other things. It's not the only thing, but I'm being a little bit parochial here, talking about what's happening in Scarborough Southwest and also in Scarborough Centre and in Malvern.

This will create thousands of jobs—jobs for engineers, jobs for people who will be building the new line, jobs for people who will be building the actual vehicles that will be transporting people. These are jobs that could be in Thunder Bay, could be in other parts of Ontario, but they will be built in Canada. We're not going to ship in cars from, I'm sorry to say, China or somewhere else; we're going to build them here, because this is where the best cars come from. Ontarians will be working on building these new vehicles that will work up and down, from Kennedy all the way up into Malvern, and also from

Kennedy all the way across to Eglinton—probably the biggest infrastructure project that I can think of—and link up with the airport here in Toronto. This is unprecedented. These are major changes that will bring about a tremendous amount of employment.

To sit there and say, “You Liberals are bad because you’re going to harmonize the tax,” is wrong. Look elsewhere. Look at the examples where it has been done and the benefits that are there. There’s \$1,000 that people get back as a refund on that, and even an additional cheque if your income is at a certain level. You’re getting money back from this. Yes, you will pay a little bit more for certain items, but you’re going to get that money back.

I cannot emphasize enough the fact that we’re not doing this to make money. We’re doing this to help small business and to help other businesses to be more efficient. So instead of having to keep one column for PST

and one column for GST, it’s combined. It’s going to be a lot easier for a lot of businesses to be able to work that way.

This is a vision. This is a well-thought-out vision, and it’s a vision of change. Whenever there is change, whether it be change at a personal level, at a family level, at a political level or at an international level, you’re always going to get resistance. Someone is going to say, “I don’t like that,” because it’s change.

I stand today and say that this budget is supportable and it’s a vision that makes a lot of sense. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o’clock, I declare that this House is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o’clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lenark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Justice Policy

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6085
Report adopted	6086

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6086
--------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace), 2009, Bill 168, Mr. Fonseca / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail (violence et harcèlement au travail), projet de loi 168, M. Fonseca	
First reading agreed to.....	6086

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Workplace safety

Hon. Peter Fonseca	6086
Mr. Robert Bailey	6087
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6087

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones	6088
------------------------	------

Workplace harassment

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6088
-------------------------	------

Garde d'enfants

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde	6088
----------------------------	------

Sales tax

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	6089
-----------------------------	------

Property taxation

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6089
-----------------------	------

Lupus

Mr. Bob Delaney	6089
-----------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6089
---------------------------	------

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6089
---------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6090
----------------------	------

Firearms control

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6090
---------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6090
--------------------------	------

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell	6090
------------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6091
--------------------------	------

Child custody

Mr. Jim Brownell	6091
------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Budget Measures Act, 2009, Bill 162, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2009 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 162, M. Duncan

Mr. Norman W. Sterling	6091
Mr. Peter Kormos	6096
Mr. Bob Delaney	6097
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6097
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6097
Mr. Norman W. Sterling	6097
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6098
Mr. Dave Levac	6100
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	6100
Mr. Peter Kormos	6101
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	6101
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6101
Mr. Rick Johnson	6102
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	6104
Mr. Norm Miller.....	6105
Mr. Peter Kormos	6105
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6106
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6106
Mr. Rick Johnson	6106
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6107
Mr. Peter Kormos	6109
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6109
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	6110
Mr. Pat Hoy	6110
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6110
Mr. Peter Kormos	6111
Mr. Mario Sergio.....	6113
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6114
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6114
Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde	6114
Mr. Peter Kormos	6114

Mrs. Liz Sandals	6115
Mr. Dave Levac	6117
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6117
Mr. Peter Kormos	6118
Mr. Bob Delaney	6118
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	6118
Mrs. Liz Sandals	6119
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6119
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6122
Mr. Mario Sergio	6122
Mr. Norm Miller	6122
Mr. Peter Kormos	6122
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6123
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6123
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6125

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 20 April 2009 / Lundi 20 avril 2009

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Jim Watson.....	6073
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6073
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6073
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6073
Hon. Margaret R. Best	6073
Hon. John Milloy	6073

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6073
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6073

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6074
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6074

Manufacturing jobs

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6075
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6075

Ontario budget

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6076
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6076

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6076
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6076

Poverty

Mr. Michael Prue	6077
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6077

Travel industry compensation fund

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6077
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	6078

Green power generation

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6078
Hon. George Smitherman.....	6078

Public health

Mme France Gélinas	6079
Hon. David Caplan.....	6079

Greenhouse gas emissions

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	6079
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6079

Student achievement

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6080
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6080

Travel industry compensation fund

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6080
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	6081

Elder abuse

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6081
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	6081

Northern Ontario development

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6082
Hon. Michael Bryant.....	6082

Ontario artists

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6082
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	6082

Moose tags

Mr. Michael A. Brown	6083
Hon. Donna H. Cansfield	6083

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Canadian Corps Association

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	6083
-----------------------------	------

Brampton spelling bee

Mr. Vic Dhillon	6083
-----------------------	------

Pembroke Lumber Kings

Mr. John Yakabuski	6084
--------------------------	------

Weston Collegiate Institute

Mrs. Laura Albanese	6084
---------------------------	------

Red Barn Theatre

Mrs. Julia Munro	6084
------------------------	------

Forest industry

Mr. Howard Hampton	6084
--------------------------	------

City of Cornwall

Mr. Jim Brownell	6085
------------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Khalil Ramal	6085
------------------------	------

Chantal Bertrand

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde	6085
-----------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
XI
-D23

Com
Public



No. 137

N° 137

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 21 April 2009

Mardi 21 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 8, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / *Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to say a few words about Bill 126, the Road Safety Act. First, I'd like to talk a little bit about the proposed regulation under Bill 126 to extend the length of the G1 and the G2 period for new drivers. According to the bill, the length of the G1 will go from one year to one and a half years. If drivers are registered in an approved driving education course, the length of their G1 will go from eight months to a year. It's the same with the G2. The G2, according to this bill, will go from one year to a year and a half.

This is the kind of measure that the New Democrats support. We believe that more driver education and public awareness is key to lowering accidents, lowering impaired driving and dangerous driving rates in the long run, but we have some concerns: concerns with the quality of driver education programs that are provided in Ontario. While we support the longer G1 and G2 period so novice drivers can absorb the education they receive, we're not convinced that the driver programs provided throughout our province right now are adequate. To support this, I quote from the report of the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, who found that 55% of first-time drivers enrolled in the program crashed their car about 62% more often.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Something is wrong with that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Something is wrong with that. In other words, there was a significantly higher collision rate for motorists who signed up for the driver education

program compared to those who did not. But even more worrisome is the fact that this number has gone up 24% since the year 2000. The Ministry of Transportation does not have an explanation for these statistics.

The Auditor General said that the province didn't investigate the finding or take a critical look at its accreditative driving school. Although terrible things were happening on our roads, nobody bothered to check. Here's what the Auditor General had to say at the time. He said, "They had done very little work at all to see why this is happening. Our question to the ministry is, this is pretty significant. Surely you should have investigated this and determined why this is happening so you could take appropriate action" to fix it.

The Auditor General then went on to say that there is evidence to suggest that some driving schools are selling graduating certificates without the required training. There are two possible explanations for this: first, systematically bad driving education courses; or second, some type of fraud, that is, requesting more certificates than you really have graduates for. There is evidence that this type of fraudulent practice is going on right here in Ontario. Even after complaints were launched against some driving schools for allegedly selling driver education certificates—so you don't have to wait as long for your G1, period, and so that you can get a discounted insurance rate—the Auditor General said, "The province didn't even threaten to revoke government accreditation." So we know that this is going on, the auditor has investigated it, but yet the Ministry of Transportation and the government do nothing. That does not bode well for confidence in that bill. What's the point of expanding G1 and G2 if somebody can go, buy a certificate and cut it in two anyway?

Basically, either explanation, whether it's bad courses altogether or fraudulent players, points to a real problem with our driving education courses—not to mention the finding that driving instructors were also more likely than average Ontarians to accumulate demerit points. According to the Auditor General, there are about 360 instructors in Ontario. Of those, 6.5% collected demerit points for speeding, for not wearing a seat belt and for disobeying traffic lights. They're being caught on the very basis of what they're trying to teach the young drivers, not following their own recommendations. This does not bode well. Not only are they being caught, but they are being caught at a higher rate than the average driver. Something's wrong with this. We certainly hope that the Auditor General follows up on this issue and the government acts upon it.

Last April, the ministry brought forward a new curriculum for driver's ed. We called on the Ministry of Transportation to comprehensively examine whether the curriculum is working and whether they have tackled the fraud in the system. New Democrats think that Ontario should consider revamping its driver education program and look at other provinces that have taken the lead in this.

I'd like to talk a little bit about what they do in Manitoba. Manitoba teaches their driver education in high school classrooms. Students, or more than likely their families, are charged \$50 and the public insurance system picks up the tab for the remaining cost. In Manitoba every high school student gets 34 hours of in-class instruction and about 16 hours of in-car experience for \$50. We think that this is reasonable, affordable and fair. It's certainly way more teaching than what any driver's education program offers in Ontario and way more in-car experience than any driver's education program we have in Ontario, at a fraction of the cost, and it is offered in school. So in Manitoba, every driver receives the same quality instruction, and given the fact that it is a public system, there is no possibility of fraud. They are doing innovative things to involve parents in the education process. For example, parents have to fill out a log to demonstrate their young driver has been on the road with a supervisor for at least 25 hours. Of course, that means the parents or guardians of the youth taking the course.

0910

On the other hand, in Ontario, young drivers and their families pay upwards of \$1,000, sometimes \$1,400, depending on the package they take. The \$1,000 package gets students 25 hours of in-class, rather than the 34 in Manitoba, and 10 hours on the road rather than the 16 hours of in-car. But it doesn't include things like night driving or snow driving, because if you want that, you have to pay more. There are countless fly-by-night operations that charge much less but don't provide good driver education. In Ontario, more money gets Ontario drivers less instruction. It doesn't seem like a good deal to me. It's time to re-evaluate our more-for-less models of driver's ed. Maybe we should follow Manitoba's lead and put a publicly subsidized driver's ed program directly into our high schools.

Not only is our driver's ed system broken, so too is the driver testing. This fact was substantiated in a recent Toronto Star investigation into driver testing operations. They found that failure rates would vary substantially from community to community. Here's what was reported: "Between 2006 and the first three weeks of 2008"—that's last year—"failure rates were highest in Brampton, at 48%, and the lowest in Sault Ste. Marie, Espanola and Kapuskasing." Those all had failure rates below 10%.

Let me give you an example from my riding. Espanola is just on the west boundary of Nickel Belt, and it doesn't take very long for the kids in my riding to all know that if you take your driver's testing in Sudbury, the chances of failure are reasonable, but if you take it in Espanola,

which is only a 25-minute drive from where I live—if you follow the speed limit—the failure rates are way lower.

I will take this kid that I know very well; her name is Ashley. Ashley was ready to go to college. There is no public transportation where I live, so if she wants to go to college in Sudbury she has to drive or find a ride. There was a hard time finding a ride as none of her friends, who were also graduating, had a driver's licence, so her parents enrolled her in driver's ed. When she was finished driver's ed, her educator, her instructor, told her, "You better go take your test in Espanola, because I don't think you're going to pass if you go to Sudbury."

So her dad drove her to Espanola. He had her practise parking, because she was not really up to par, and then said, "Well, good luck to you," but he stayed in his car and waited while she took her driver's test, thinking, "She's not ready." They came back. She had to do parallel parking, which she is unable to do; she managed to squeeze the car between two other cars in the parking lot, and guess what? She passed. It was kind of a mixed blessing—a blessing that she had her driver's licence, so at least she would be able to drive herself to college, but her dad knew that she was not ready. This kid did not know how to parallel park. This kid was not a good driver.

He had the good sense to continue to practise with her all summer long, so that when September came along they bought her a little Sunfire and she was able to drive herself to school. But if it wasn't for the good sense of her dad, who continued to practise with her all summer long so that she would become a safe driver, I wonder what would have happened. Not only do a lot of the kids in Sudbury know that if you think you're going to fail, go to Espanola, because they're going to pass you; lots of the driver instructors also know this and recommend this to the students they don't think are ready. There is something fundamentally wrong there. If you don't think your student is ready, you should make sure that they get the practice to be ready, rather than send a young driver out on the road when really they don't know how to drive.

I pointed to that example because this is a serious loophole. For the story I told you about, just to let you know, she's been in college for three years, never had an accident and is doing just fine. She's also one of the kids who carpools a lot of the kids in our neighbourhood.

As I mentioned, in Walden, where I live, there is no public transportation, so once the kid is finished high school, as soon as they go to college or Laurentian University, most of them have to drive themselves. You see them gather at the Tim Hortons, and everybody carpools. It's a good distance; it's a good 35- or 40-minute drive, depending on how fast you drive, to go to either Cambrian College or Laurentian University from Walden. It could even be over an hour if you live further down, in Whitefish or Beaver Lake or any of the western part of my riding.

So the kids all meet together, and they carpool to college. We're certainly pleased that the McGuinty Lib-

erals have agreed to reverse the restrictions on young drivers' daytime passengers, because in our riding, for kids going to school, it would have been really, really problematic.

But coming back to the driver's ed, I have given you one example of a loophole. It opens the door to people driving to other communities to pass tests that they should not have passed had they gone to another location. The reason behind this is the result of years of privatization of driver testing facilities. Enforceable, province-wide standards went out the window with the privatization effort. If we want to have more control over driving tests in Ontario, if we want to strengthen Ontario-wide standards and actively motivate them, then we have to rethink those private driver-testing facilities. There is an obvious draw for a private testing facility to attract as many young drivers as possible, and this does not foster an environment that encourages quality. The story I've just told you certainly is an example of that.

New Democrats also want to know what the impact of tougher legislation and regulation will be on young and novice driver insurance rates. On top of paying through the roof for driver's ed, drivers are paying unaffordable rates of insurance. We want to know what impact the legislation and regulations have on insurance rates.

Right now, we know that if a young driver is caught going 10 kilometres over, they will have a 30-day suspension. But what we want to know is what impact that will have on their insurance rates. As I said, there are many parts in northern and rural Ontario where public transit is not an option. For young people to go to school, they need to drive, and often they need to drive long distances. In order to do this, of course, they need car insurance to do it in a safe way. The car insurance is often in the thousands of dollars. When my own children started to drive, we were looking at close to \$4,000 for the boys and about \$2,000 for our daughter to insure them on the family car. This is a lot of money.

0920
I'm afraid that, although those rates are already out of reach for a lot of families, they would become even more out of reach with this new law because once the young driver has a 30-day suspension for driving 10 kilometres over the speed limit—the basis of it is teaching them a good lesson, that they should not speed. We don't want the insurance company to use those proactive measures to make car insurance even more out of reach to more young people in Ontario. We'd like to see the balance there and we would like to see some assurance in the bill so that costs of insurance for young drivers don't go skyrocketing high.

The bill, as I said, when it was first introduced, talked about young drivers' daytime passenger restrictions. This provision of the bill led to an outpouring of thoughts, opposition and arguments. Many of the opponents, those who knew first-hand—and there were a lot of them in my riding, let me tell you—that this restriction would not work, used the medium they were most comfortable with. They used Facebook. The number of messages I got on

Facebook was unprecedented. The number of new friends who wanted to become friends with me was unprecedented. They were all young kids from my riding and they all had a very strong message. They were carpooling to Laurentian, to Cambrian, to Collège Boréal, and they needed to be able to continue to do this. When kids graduate from high school, with the new condensed high school program, some of them are very young. You can graduate from high school at 16 and 17. This is considered—

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Some of my colleagues are having a little conversation here, but go ahead, guys.

So they knew first-hand that the restriction didn't work. It was on Facebook that 150,000 people registered their opposition. The fact that so many people were engaged in this public debate is a healthy sign of democracy. It is unfortunate that not too often the public engage, especially young people, but with this bill moving through the Legislature, they were motivated. They came out in droves; 150,000 people belong to the Facebook group that opposed this legislation. This is huge. This is young people who don't usually pay too much attention to politics, are not really always as engaged as we would like them to be, but they got engaged, they got educated and they spoke out loud. It is perhaps also unfortunate that most of them only take notice when something they feel is wrong catches their eye, but it was nevertheless an engagement in the democratic process and for New Democrats this is a good thing. There's never anything bad about people being engaged in the democratic process. This is what a democracy is all about. This is a good thing.

With the sizable outcry that came from this restriction, a restriction that, frankly, made no sense when it came to communities like mine—rural communities, northern communities—and really a bill that treated young people unfairly, thankfully, it was eventually taken out of the bill, and New Democrats are happy that this is the case.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you for that.

The lesson one should draw from this reversal is that government must demonstrate concretely that a regulation or policy will or is likely to work. In this case, no evidence was presented to show that the move would prevent the death or injury of young drivers. We know and acknowledge that young drivers disproportionately represent those killed and injured in drunk driving incidents. What we weren't convinced of, however, is whether extending the passenger restriction already in place—because there is passenger restriction already in place during the night from midnight to 5 a.m.—was going to do anything.

New Democrats will now support Bill 126. We support the stronger stance on alcohol, for example, which was a long time in coming, but it basically brings us up to speed with other provinces. In fact, we believe that provinces and the federal government should examine zero tolerance blood alcohol rules for all drivers, not just for

those under 21. In many respects, the 21 cut-off is artificial. Let's not kid ourselves: Alcohol affects each and every one of us, no matter how old we are.

However, we are disappointed that the government chose not to listen to the concerns of many other groups and particularly cyclist groups. I will let my colleague Rosario Marchese talk a little bit more about our opposition to what this bill contains about cycling, because he is an avid cyclist who comes to Queen's Park on his bicycle, in quite a charming way, I must say. He has a nice little beret and a very nice bicycle, and he looks very distinguished. So I will let him talk to you a little bit more about this.

In closing, because I have to leave some time on the clock for my colleague, I wanted to talk a little bit about motor vehicle accidents. We've talked about young people, having a high proportion of young drivers in fatal accidents and in motor vehicle accidents. But here again, I want to give an example from my riding. There are a lot of accidents happening on Highway 69. There is a stretch on Highway 69 coming out of Sudbury, into my riding and going south, where the passing lane is so short that it is almost impossible to use it to pass. But once you've engaged in passing, the 300-metre sign happens right away, and then you're stuck with the oncoming traffic coming at you.

There have been numerous accidents on this particular stretch of Highway 69, yet when a motor vehicle accident happens, there is no mandatory requirement for an investigation; there is no mandatory requirement for a coroner's inquest. When somebody dies in a mine or on a construction site, by law, there has to be an inquest. You find out what happened, you put in measures to prevent, and you learn from your mistakes so that other tragedies don't happen.

Unfortunately, when somebody—and I can give you the example of Cathy Snow. Cathy Snow was a home care nurse who worked in my riding. She was driving down Highway 69 and got into a collision and died. She died on the job. Her job was to drive from house to house. But because she was in a motor vehicle accident, there was no inquiry, although, had there been an inquiry, we feel that some structural changes to our highway would have been done.

I gave the example of this passing lane just coming out of Sudbury that is way too short. Car after car, person after person, have accidents on that stretch of highway, but nothing is done. We need to have tougher regulations that would mandate investigation and coroner inquiry in motor vehicle accidents so that first, you can bring closure to the family who have lost loved ones, but second, you learn from their mistake. Sure, there are lots of times when it is driver error, but here again, driver error, if it's the same mistake that is made over and over, can be corrected.

But very seldom do we go back and look at the engineering and design of the roads that we drive on: "Did that contribute to that fatality? Did that contribute to that motor vehicle accident?" This is not done. I believe that a

lot could be learned from this so that young drivers and older, experienced drivers drive on roads that are safer, so that once we find that a design is flawed, we correct it and we do not repeat it someplace else.

0930

I'm running out of time. I was pleased to be able to say a few words about this bill and will leave time on the clock for my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My colleague from Nickel Belt has covered so much. I'm going to find a way to make some comments on the bill that I hope are very useful and practical.

One of the things that the member from Nickel Belt talked about was the elimination of one of the aspects of the bill that the government had introduced that caused so much furor: that young people were not allowed to carry more than one passenger in their vehicle. Over 150,000 young people responded in Facebook with outrage. I say to myself, I wonder whether the Liberals had intended to do this as a way of getting young people to be actively involved, because it worked.

There's really no easy way to get young people involved in politics, and I thought, the Liberals are so clever. They must have said to themselves, "How do we get young people involved?" They weren't that serious about restricting the number of passengers that young people could fit into their cars; I don't think it was intentional on the part of the government. It was intended to make sure young people get involved; I am convinced of it. I think the Liberals should do more of this on a regular basis, because we know that we should do a better job in our civics courses in our high school curricula to get young people involved—we know that. The Liberals haven't done that yet, and maybe they will some day, but what a clever thing you did; that's so very clever. You should take credit for that. You should stand up and say, "We knew all along. We knew what we were doing because we don't have the means by which we get young people to be politically involved and we had to find a way for them to respond with anger"—legitimate anger, but knowing it was legitimate. You understood they would be angry, and that was good. You wanted to test them out. You wanted to actually see whether young people would take notice and get angry and, in fact, write their messages on Facebook.

You guys are so good; you Liberals are so amazing at it, but you've got to learn from it. I'm just saying, you can't just do it one time and then be done; you've got to do it more frequently, because otherwise, if you only just do it once and young people go back into their homes and their books and Facebook and play other games, you've lost the effect of that great strategy. Don't give it up; keep practising and keep doing it, because you want to be tight with young people. How else do we do it? That was very clever. I don't know what the member from Nickel Belt has to say about this, but it was really neat. Whether it was intended or not, it was a brilliant strategy and I

give you credit. I just look forward to more and more bills that have that ability and capacity to get young people actively engaged.

The other thing the member from Nickel Belt talked about was the Auditor General's report, the report that found that 55% of the first-time drivers enrolled in the program crashed their cars about 62% more often. I thought that was very interesting. In other words, there was a significantly higher collision rate for motorists who sign up for the driver's education program. I thought, this is curious. You sign up, you take lessons, you drive better and you crash more: That's an interesting thing. I think the idea of going to a driver's testing place was that they teach you how to drive so that you have fewer accidents. Yet the auditor report said that it's quite the opposite.

What's puzzling and curious is that the minister had so very little to say. I think to myself, hmm, this is a very curious finding. The Auditor General said you've got to do something—oh, here's what the auditor said: "They had done very little work at all to see why this is happening."

This is pretty significant. Surely you should have investigated this and determined why this is happening so you could take appropriate action.

The Auditor General then suggested that "there is evidence to suggest some driving schools are selling graduation certificates without the required training." Did you get that? Maybe you missed it. The Auditor General said, "There is evidence to suggest some driving schools are selling graduation certificates...." If that is true, it's a serious problemo, don't you think? The minister hasn't done anything yet that I'm aware of. I could be wrong. Maybe the minister is working hard at this, in terms of solving it. But the Auditor General is about to release another report, and I suspect he's going to condemn somebody again. He might be condemning the driving schools and he might be condemning—not directly, you understand—the minister, who has done so very little to deal with this particular issue.

If there is fraud, there's criminality involved, and we should be dealing with it. And if the minister has solved the potential fraudulence, we should have heard from the minister by now.

So my question is, where are you, Minister, on this? What have you done and what have you said? Are you, by the way, anticipating another Auditor General's report that might be, in a short, little while, condemning you again? If that happens, it's not going to look too pretty on the minister or this government.

I just thought I'd raise it. I don't know; I'm just worried about you guys. I'm worried about the Liberal Party, in terms of its ability to be able to deal with tough questions like this.

The Auditor General, God bless him. They're tough; and they should be, because that's their job. Their job is to be able to make every government accountable. They held us accountable, they held the Tories accountable, and they're trying to hold you accountable as well. I suspect the Auditor General is going to have a whole lot to say in a very short, little while.

What's interesting is that in Manitoba, the driving schools are public—they're not private—which leads me to the whole issue of public auto insurance. I have to tell you, I was such a strong supporter of public auto—I was. And I made my intentions and ideas very, very clear on this during the Rae government. It was sad to have the former leader of the NDP, now turned Liberal, turn his back on public auto. He must have changed his mind four times, and I was so, so disappointed with that.

Public auto insurance works in Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba. It works. And the rates are cheaper for people. They have a driving school that's public. Manitoba teaches their driver education in high school classrooms. Can you believe that? They do it publicly and they do it in public classrooms. Students and their families are charged 50 bucks, with their public insurance system picking up the tab for the remainder of the costs—about \$300—that includes 34 hours of in-class instruction and 16 hours—eight hours of actual driving—in-car experience. That's reasonable and it's affordable. It's a public system. Manitoba leads in so many areas, and we often refer to them. We often have questions of the Liberal government around so many different issues, around where Manitoba leads, and this is but one small part of how Manitoba leads in so many other areas.

I wanted to mention that because I have to tell you, the public insurance rates are so much cheaper in the provinces I mentioned that it's beyond me why we haven't moved faster on making the system public. And young people—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You made the decision.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You guys came to the decision.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I was just speaking to this. You weren't listening, were you?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: No, I was reading the Farmer.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know, you're reading the Farmer. I know. You see, the point I make is that I'm a big supporter of public auto, and I was trying to convince the then leader, Bob Rae, to stay on course and make auto insurance public. There was a tiny band of us that really, really felt strongly about keeping auto insurance public. We tried to persuade Bob. We weren't very successful. That's what I was trying to say, you understand.

0940

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I got you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I didn't know whether you—because you're, you know—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I can listen to you and read.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't know about that. Only some rare individuals can do two things at once—mostly women; I don't know about men. I can vouch for that.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about is, if there is an infraction by some young person, whatever it is, are the insurance rates going to go up? I suggest to you that they are. My colleague from Nickel Belt raises it as a question. If a young driver receives a 30-day suspension for driving 10 kilometres above the speed limit, will that

affect his insurance? Yes, you bet your life it will. Young people are paying incredible insurance rates to drive a car. I understand that some young people are sometimes reckless; I really do. We need driving schools that are going to teach young people a little more effectively. I support the Auditor General in making sure that we do a better job of that. But I've got to tell you that the insurance rates young people pay are astronomical. It's kind of nuts. I really don't understand it. I don't understand how young people, the very 150,000 young people who protested the restrictions on how many passengers they could have in their cars, are not fighting these incredibly outrageous, steep insurance rates they pay to drive a car. They pay anywhere from \$2,000 to \$6,000 for their insurance. Where do they find the money to drive? Maybe we don't want them to drive. Maybe we want them to ride bicycles. That's fine by me, but let's say that. How do we allow these insurance companies to charge these incredible rates? And where do they find the money? If rich mom and dad don't pay up, who's going to pay for those insurance rates? I've got to tell you, a whole lot of young people are driving without insurance because insurance rates are so incredibly high. That's why it should be made public. Shouldn't we give everybody an opportunity to drive in an affordable way? And we really have to get a handle on these driving schools. I can't wait for the next Auditor General report—I really can't. We've got to get a handle on the fact that these driving schools are not doing a great job, and where there is fraud, we've got to deal with them. We've got to be tough.

I am urging young people who may be watching to get on Facebook and talk about insurance rates. That would put a little fire under the seats of Liberal members, I can tell you. Imagine 150,000 or 250,000 young people actively involved, saying, "We can't afford these insurance rates. We won't take it anymore. We want you Liberals to change the law, otherwise we're going to bring you down." Wouldn't that be lovely? It would be lovely. I'd love to be behind that campaign—as a former teacher, just to be helpful, you understand; not to see the Liberals go down. That's not really my objective. My objective is to get young people actively engaged. There's a thing you could do, right?

I pointed out how clever you were to impose restrictions on young people in terms of their ability to drive more than one passenger, or not to drive more than one passenger, and how successful you were to get young people involved.

Here's another idea that I give to you: Put the idea out that you want to get the insurance rates down because they're unaffordable, and see how many hits you get on Facebook. I can tell you, you're going to get a whole lot. That's the way to get young people involved. Think about it. I'm just trying to help you.

I can see that they're busy reading. They're not really interested. Nobody's really interacting with me. You've got to interact with me, otherwise it's a monologue here. All of you are reading. I don't know what you're reading.

It can't be a one-man show. We need to engage each other. Come on, wake up. Engage me. Say something funny. Come on. I'm trying to keep you awake, and all of you are just pretending you're working. Come on, I know you're not working. I know you're listening to what I have to say. You've got to engage me. I know you were told by the whip, "Don't engage Marchese. Just pretend you're not listening. Pretend you're reading. Pretend you're busy." I know he told you that, but don't do that. That's not helpful. Engage me. That way, we can carry on the discussion.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There you go. You see? Thank you, whip.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member for Trinity-Spadina should stick to the bill before us and not try to entice the members of the government into unparliamentary interruptions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate your drawing that matter to my attention and would remind all members of the House it's important to engage the Chair as well as the members on the other side. I appreciate that and I return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I always try to engage you as well because I like to engage everyone through the Speaker, and everyone else. I thank the member for Eglinton-Lawrence for engaging me in that way. That was very helpful. That's what I was talking about, right? The idea is to pay attention and to have a dialogue, because that's what this assembly is about—dialogue. It's about talking to each other. So I say something and you say something back and we carry on this discussion.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about is these scooters that you included in this bill. I have a letter from someone who wrote me about the issue of these scooters:

"Bill 126, the Road Safety Act, which includes the re-definition of 'bicycle' to include power-assisted bicycles," he said, is of concern to him. "It contains a far too broad and easily abused definition of 'power-assisted bicycle.' Indeed, the current legislation is actually going to push back the limited progress we have seen in building our cycling infrastructure.

"These motorized scooters are not bicycles and will prove to be a hazard to bicycles if the legislation is enacted. We need specific, clear and strict regulations to govern this new breed of electric vehicle/motor scooter.

"I know that we are at third reading, but please, I implore you to prevent this legislation from passing as it is currently configured."

This is Matthew Church who wrote me this letter. He's obviously concerned. It's for that reason that my colleague Gilles Bisson raised this particular issue—the member for Thunder-James Bay, I wanted to say. He raised this issue in committee when they were doing the hearings. Clearly, it didn't pass. I'm not quite—

Interjection: Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Timmins-James Bay. What did I say? Thunder Bay?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thunder–Timmins.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: From Thunder–Timmins with a thunderous kind of connection to that particular area.

He raised this issue in committee. As far as I know, it didn't get any support from the Liberal members, but we know that there are a lot of cyclists who are concerned about this, for the very reasons that Matthew Church stated in his letter ever so briefly. These scooters are heavier and potentially a little more dangerous to share the same cycling infrastructure that is very limited at the moment, which should be built in a much better way, and more of it across Ontario. We haven't seen enough of that, and when you include scooters in that particular cycling infrastructure, it's going to create problems. He raised a good point. Gilles Bisson, our colleague, raised that in committee and got very little support from the Liberal members.

I wanted to raise this point because I know that I'm not the only one who shares this concern. There are many cyclists who obviously share this particular concern. We hope at some point that the Liberal members are going to review this legislation again with a view to making it easier on all cyclists.

These are the points I wanted to raise. My colleague raised many of them and I wanted to raise a couple of these issues. We look forward to the two-minute responses from the Liberal members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I really enjoyed the discussion this morning on Bill 126. The member for Nickel Belt and the member for Trinity–Spadina have made this a very engaging and entertaining conversation, although we did talk about many things that had nothing to do with the bill. There were many issues raised in this act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. One of the issues was the zero blood alcohol level; one was the roadside vehicle impoundment expansion; another issue was strengthening the penalties for certain highway traffic acts. I'm glad to hear that the members of the New Democratic Party are supporting this legislation, because I think it is a good piece of legislation. We've listened to a lot of our stakeholders; they made a lot of recommendations which we did follow.

0950

I would say that one of the most surprising responses we got in the course of our hearings was the level of interest on the e-bikes. Certainly the member from Trinity–Spadina has raised some of those issues, but I would say that I was really pleasantly surprised by the number of individuals who came forward and wanted to speak on this issue. They were very knowledgeable, they gave some very practical suggestions, and it's certainly an area that the Ministry of Transportation looked at very seriously. So we have looked at pilot projects before and we are proposing to add a definition of "power-assisted bicycle" to the legislation, and the regulations require that an evaluation be completed before the end of the program which was part of the pilot program.

I think we heard a lot of very constructive dialogue from our stakeholders, and there are a lot of decisions that are still ongoing that the minister said he's going to look at making. Certainly no decision has been made on the scooter-style e-bikes, which should make the member from Trinity–Spadina feel a little more comforted. We're listening and we heard some good suggestions and we're going to be following them. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to make a few comments on the comments made by the NDP in their leadoff. I think these debates on highway safety and the safety of the operation of vehicles are critical in our Legislature and in our committee hearings. I understand that this bill has been fairly well received in a lot of areas and there's been a lot of good debate on it as well. But let's face it, we as politicians are here to make changes that have an impact and make our roads and highways safer, particularly for our young people. I think that successive governments have made some pretty positive strides in that way. However, the bulk of the accidents today, as you are aware, are still with young people on our roads. Anything we can do—whether it's the training of young people in our schools, in driver education programs, whatever it may be—has to have a positive influence. No matter what happens, one life saved in any particular area is worth a tremendous amount. I know we've had cases that were brought forward last year, with the accident that happened up in Muskoka that brought a lot of attention to it; even in the case of our own colleague Julie Kwiecinski as well, whose nephew was lost in a serious accident on Highway 400. That brought a lot of attention right in our own caucus room to the fact that young people are on the highways. Through no fault of his own, he lost his life.

I think these debates are important and that we move forward with the bill. There will always be times when bills need to be amended and there will be further changes required. But in the end, we are trying to save lives, and I compliment anyone who is taking a positive approach to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened carefully to both members, from Nickel Belt and Trinity–Spadina, when they spoke about their support, first, for this bill. It's very important to get the support of the opposition. I know that the member from Nickel Belt mentioned many different elements and she agreed with us that drivers under 21 are sometimes subject to drink and cause a lot of collisions and accidents. But I didn't agree with the special training for young drivers because I know, and many people in this place know, very well that young students, young drivers, the young people, drive better than their parents and they have a lot of ability to drive. The issue is not about driving; the issue is about drinking and driving. The issue is about attitude and behaviour while you are

driving. Young people these days are subject to many different tools and equipment and they train themselves very well. But the most important thing, I guess, is to focus on attitude and behaviour while you're driving.

Talking about a very important issue, I'm from the city of London, and if you go to get yourself tested in the city of London and you fail, you can go to a small town nearby and get a pass. This is, I guess, a flaw in the system. Do you know why? When the Harris government privatized testing stations across the province of Ontario, it created some divisions in the system. I wish our government, in the future, when the contract expires, will go to the public system because it's very important to make sure that every station and every testing place do the same things.

Also, I think, if this bill passes, it will help to lower students' fees. It's very important. When the insurance companies know we have strict regulations and rules, I think that the fee will be lower rather than higher.

To end, I want to compliment both members for speaking in support and focusing on so many different elements that benefit us and the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to add some comments to the speeches by the members for Nickel Belt and Trinity–Spadina on Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Certainly, as the member for Nickel Belt pointed out, many young people were engaged with this bill, particularly on Facebook: 150,000 young people. I'd like to thank the many young people from Parry Sound–Muskoka who e-mailed me protesting the restrictions that were going to be put on the number of young people who could ride in a car—those under 22, I believe it was. They pointed out that this just didn't make sense for carpooling and designated drivers, and particularly for rural and northern communities.

I would suggest that if the government wanted to create more feedback from young people, they could discuss the cost of insurance for young drivers as well. That would probably also stimulate feedback from young people.

There are still some aspects of this bill that make me wonder if they're necessary. I see greatly increased fines, for example, for not wearing a seat belt, which goes from \$60 to \$500. The fine for careless driving goes from \$200 to \$1,000. That seems excessive to me. I wonder if it's just another tax grab on the part of the government. It seems to me that if you are charged and convicted of careless driving, your penalty is really the huge increase that you're going to face in terms of your insurance costs that you're going to have to deal with going forward.

I would also like to protest the fact that the government is time-allocating its budget, Bill 162, but we're getting time to debate Bill 126. This is a drivers' bill. They are bringing in a draconian—cutting off debate on the budget bill, which deals with so many more issues, just this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the member for Brampton–Springdale. That was news to us, that no decisions have been made regarding scooters. We are certainly open to e-bikes that are assisted, but still human-powered. In our minds, a human-powered bike belongs in the bike lane, but a scooter does not. We're happy to see that the government is looking at a definition that makes a difference between an e-bike and a scooter. This is something that we would support.

To the member for Simcoe North, the New Democrats certainly support bills that make our roads and our driving safer. I come from 25 years in health care. For years and years after every long weekend, you would go back to work and find multitraumatization from a motor vehicle accident. It happens way too often and it has horrendous consequences on the people involved in those motor vehicle accidents. Anything we can do to prevent that is worth it because the suffering that comes after a polytraumatization from a multi-vehicle accident is just horrendous and should be prevented.

To the member for London–Fanshawe, I'm happy that the government recognized that the privatization of the testing of young drivers was not a good idea and that it should be a public system that tests the drivers to see if they deserve a driver's license. It would bring stability to the system, and this is something we support. I was happy to hear him speak to this.

And to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, certainly this bill has seen an engagement of young people that we have rarely seen, and I too want to thank all young people who got involved. Keep it up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote is automatically deferred, according to the standing orders, until the time appropriated for deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The House is in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1001 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery, we have Carol Heck, mother of new page Kenzie Murray from the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the Minister of Tourism and page Myriam Faucher, I would

like to welcome her father, Guy Faucher, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to take their positions so we can formally introduce them to all the members.

I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 39th Parliament:

Eric Bryce, Mississauga South; Michael Bzovsky, Etobicoke Centre; Adelina Cozma, Richmond Hill; Nicola Craig, Eglinton–Lawrence; Zachary Crichton, Bramalea–Gore–Malton; Robyn Currie, Dufferin–Caledon; Corey Davidson, Huron–Bruce; Lindsay Eenkooren, Kitchener–Conestoga; Myriam Faucher, Nipissing; Rabeb Haouas, Toronto Centre; Alexis Harquail, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; Cameron Hoey, Guelph; Grace Lee, Scarborough–Agincourt; Kenzie Murray, Oak Ridges–Markham; Emily Sellner, Thunder Bay–Atikokan; Timothy Swampillai, Scarborough–Rouge River; Cameron Tomlinson, Sarnia–Lambton; Cooper Toogood, Newmarket–Aurora; Lara Watson, Parkdale–High Park; and Michael Webster, York Centre.

Welcome to the pages. Please reassume your positions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for Canada's newest welfare Premier. Premier, we can all see the economic tailspin that you and your deputies have created for this province, but it wasn't long ago when, in fact, this province was the best place to be. We had six- and seven-figure job growth and we had balanced budgets. We had an explosive industry investment, red tape reduction and we were paying our way in Confederation. Due to your lack of leadership, we now have six-figure job losses, deficit budgets and industry is fleeing, and now, we're on the dole. Officially, we're a have-not province.

Do you think that implementing your new blended sales tax will fix the damage you've done over six years?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Premier?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say to the honourable member that I think that there's much in the question, by the tone of the question and in the rhetoric of the question, that most members of this Legislature—and I dare say, quite a few members of that member's own party—might want to disassociate themselves from. At its fundamental heart, that question speaks of an Ontario that's very different than the one that we see and that we think most of the people of the province see. As an example, he said he'd like to see an Ontario that was

paying our way in Confederation. Through transfers to the government of Canada, Ontario continues to be the single biggest contributor to Confederation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: To the Deputy: Last week, the Premier was in Ottawa picking up Ontario's first welfare cheque. What a proud moment for Ontario. I did notice something a little bit out of character, though. There were no lights, there were no cameras and there was no big photo op with his cheque and adoring fans. It was almost like it didn't happen, but it did, and it's embarrassing that Canada's economic engine is now on the dole. You've taken us from first place to last place in Confederation, and with this latest blended tax grab, it's clear that you can't even steer a course for economic recovery.

Deputy Premier, Ontario's now on welfare. Why are you further crippling our recovery with this new BS tax?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to use the beginning point of this answer to develop even further the contrast that exists in our spirit, in our sense of the people of the province of Ontario, and that honourable member and perhaps that party in which he sits.

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: I hear one or two perking up, like the one from Halton who has previously expressed this view: that we should be embarrassed to be people in Ontario. Instead, we see our place in the history of our country as a privileged role, an important role. We continue to be depended upon to support the services in the government of Canada. Ontario continues to be the largest single contributor to the net proceeds that the government of Canada distributes elsewhere in our country. This is a role that we have always played.

These are challenging times in Ontario, and that's why our budget makes the biggest single investments in the history of our province related to infrastructure and why we protect essential public services in these challenging economic times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Deputy, you can't continue to squeeze productivity out of people and increase the cost of public administration. You continue to expand public sector jobs while sticking it to hard-working people and businesses who create the wealth you spend so freely. On this side we know that you need to sell this blended sales tax somewhere else. People know it's just another Liberal BST tax. Deputy Premier, did you give Ontario workers a second thought before you brought the hammer down and put the screws to them for the finishing touch?

Hon. George Smitherman: The leader of that party himself said, with respect to this tax that the honourable member has just spoken about, that he supports it both in principle and in theory. We have many commentators who suggest that this initiative is the biggest single con-

tribution that can be made to enhancing the competitiveness of our jurisdiction, which is about getting people in opportunities for employment to prosper in our society.

In terms of public services, we know the history of that party. We had in our budget a commitment to reduce the Ontario public service by 5%, but we make no apology for the fact that in the last five years, under the leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty, there are more nurses working in Ontario. We will not apologize that there are more police officers on duty in Ontario, and we will not apologize that people inspect labour sites and opportunities where the environment is to be protected. These are all additional public servants under the McGuinty government, and we do not apologize for that.

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Deputy Premier. For 140 years, Ontario has contributed to Confederation. We helped those provinces that envied our prosperity. Under your direction, that role has been reversed. You have not only let Ontario down, you have let Canada down. Your government is failing all Canadians. I know that timing is everything in politics, and you fellas have the worst timing I've ever seen. Why, at this time of economic upheaval, have you chosen to pick the pockets of taxpayers and small businesses with this blended sales tax?

1040

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, we challenge members of that party who believe, as that member just said, that Ontario does not contribute to Confederation, to stand in their place and say, "We support these outrageous statements coming from the occasional visitor from the back bench."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. George Smitherman: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

I want to pay appropriate attention and I want to acknowledge that it's leadership day, and from the back bench of that party comes the idea that Ontario does not contribute to Confederation. If you believe in that, then stand with him, and if you do not, then disassociate yourself from it.

And the honourable member talks about small businesses. The benefit to small businesses is half a billion dollars in reduced costs as a result of not having to fill out two identical streams of paperwork. This is one example of benefits to the tune of half a billion dollars to small businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We all know that this government likes to work in the shadows. They even kept the BST secret from their own caucus.

In another shadowy operation, their government filed a motion to close debate on the budget, a budget that is putting Ontario deeper into the red hole of Liberalism. On this side we are proposing an amendment that would allow the constituents of your members, like Mrs. Sandals and Mrs. Mitchell, to be heard on this BST.

Minister, will you allow members in those communities—or are your members being silenced and told to obey? Why won't you allow the people to speak to your new BST?

Hon. George Smitherman: I believe that some would argue that the constituents of a particular riding have more likelihood of their voices being heard by members who show up in this place and participate in the debate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just reminded the honourable member, in a previous answer, regarding his reference to the attendance of the member. I would just ask him to refrain from making references to attendance of members in the House. I would ask that he withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do withdraw. Were I given the full opportunity, I was paying compliment to the extent to which those two members—it is out of order to name members by name as he did in his question—to whom he referred are hard-working members and make strong representations on behalf of their constituencies in this Legislature every single day.

But where we have quarrel with the honourable member and with those who support him in that party is the idea that our Ontario does not contribute to Confederation. Yes, we have challenges, and we seek to address those with unprecedented investments in infrastructure and supporting the public services that people depend upon. He says that we spend too much and later on in question period other members of that party will stand and say, "Please spend more."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: The Deputy Premier is one silver-tongued bugger, I must admit. Rather than—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that he just made, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw. The Deputy Premier is one silver-tongued devil, I must admit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Look, this is not helpful in trying to maintain some decorum in the House by delivering personal attacks—on both sides, I would like to add. I just ask the honourable member to be more cautious in his choice of words.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Rather than scrap two regulations for every new one, as they promised, thousands of new regulations have been put on the books. The Red Tape Commission has been scrapped, and two red tape reduction acts by this side of the House have been squashed or ignored. They're adding to the regulatory burden, they are hiding their budget from the public and they're bringing in the biggest BST grab. If timing is everything, why are you ramming through this BST and hiding the budget from those who are most affected?

Hon. George Smitherman: We've heard similar language from people in that party, only then they were on this side when they talked about regulation, but they forgot what the implication of that was in the context of Walkerton.

We think that there are opportunities, of course, to reduce regulatory burdens. The burden of the protection of our people also lands on the responsibility of government. Much of that regulation is inclined to be able to do that.

I want to say to the honourable member, on the issue of the associated tax benefits, that 93% of the people in the province of Ontario will get a tax cut as a result of measures associated with our budget on the first \$38,000 of income. An average family with \$80,000 of income will see a 10% tax cut, and the first \$36,000 of income will see a 17% tax cut. Ninety thousand people will no longer pay taxes in the province of Ontario. These are part and parcel of a package which also dramatically enhances—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Leader of the third party.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. New Democrats are outraged with this government for stifling debate on one of the most controversial budgets that we have seen in decades. You will only give Ontarians one day of hearings, one day to express their views on your budget—a single day. We wonder what this government is afraid of. Maybe it's afraid that Ontarians will ask why they're forking over \$4 billion to corporations who don't need it, while tens of thousands of good-paying jobs disappear every month in this province. Why is the McGuinty government afraid to hear what Ontarians have to say about their own budget?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's noteworthy, isn't it, that in addressing the subject of the budget and how quickly we want to move to implement, that the honourable member doesn't bother to mention that this is the budget that nearly doubles the amount of supports enjoyed in the Ontario child benefit, something that everyone points to as a step in progress towards eliminating child poverty in the province of Ontario. The honourable member doesn't talk about the 725,000 people in the province of Ontario who will enjoy a reduction in taxes. The honourable member does not talk and say that in these difficult and challenging times, this budget seeks to preserve the gains that we've made with respect to important public services, and invests in an unprecedented level of infrastructure that will see substantial employment and help us to build a foundation for a stronger economy. Just as this measure related to the tax does, this is the largest single issue that we can initiate, the largest single thing that we can do to enhance the competitiveness of the province of Ontario and to get more of our people working.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the reason this government is so impatient with democracy these days is because of the sorry state of the Ontario economy after five years of Liberal government: some 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost, double-digit unemployment in many communities and a government with no answers—no

answers on the auto crisis, no answers on the forestry crisis, no answers on the steel crisis, no answers, period.

I ask again, why is this government railroading democracy?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, we know that most of the people in the province of Ontario do not operate in a mindset where they think that the economic challenges which we face are germane only to our jurisdiction. This is the honourable member's fantasy land that decides that these situations, as an example, with the steel industry are germane only to the challenges here in Ontario and are not to be found elsewhere. Why does the honourable member reject people like Pat Capponi for the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction? She said, "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians."

At the heart of it, this budget is about moving Ontario forward in challenging times, investing in our public services, rebuilding our infrastructure and getting Ontario's economy in shape to enhance our competitiveness and get more of our people working.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the Premier wants to shut down debate because after five years of Liberal government, northern Ontario's economy is devastated. Almost 5,000 workers are out of work in Sudbury, as Vale Inco and Xstrata idle their operations, and Abitibi-Bowater files for bankruptcy. Maybe the Premier wants to shut down the debate in this province because the jobs and pensions of thousands and thousands of auto workers are at risk, and he simply has no answers.

1050

Why is this government using the jackboots of time allocation to close down this crucial debate at this very serious economic time?

Hon. George Smitherman: Our government acknowledges that there are challenges associated with the economy in northern Ontario. That's why, in a variety of ways—for the forest industry, subsidization on electricity rates, direct investments with those kinds of companies, through our work in the northern growth plan, through working closely with the mining sector—we're looking to enhance all of those opportunities.

But the honourable member cannot pretend that Ontario's resource-based economy is Ontario's alone, that these challenges don't occur in other jurisdictions that offer the same services. These are challenging times, and that's why our budget stands behind people. It provides support in the form of nearly doubling the Ontario child benefit. It preserves the gains that we've made in core public services like health care and education and post-secondary education. It makes unprecedented investments in infrastructure at levels never seen before, and it moves us forward to enhance our competitiveness with what many people have said has been the single biggest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Acting Premier: This recent budget has sparked a greater response from Ontarians than any budget in memory, and I have to tell you that, notwithstanding what the Acting Premier is saying, it has not been a positive response. I'm hearing from men and women across this province who believe strongly that this budget is actually going to harm them and their families. These women and men cannot understand why the McGuinty government is hitting them with an 8% tax hike when they're already struggling to make ends meet.

Is this why the McGuinty government is foreclosing democratic debate on this budget bill, because it simply doesn't want to face the anger and pain of thousands of hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, as is the case very often with their party, is hung up on process, but won't speak about content. Over the course of the last month, substantial opportunities have been provided for discussion on these matters, but the honourable member in her very question demonstrates that she has not covered the content of the budget in and of itself.

She does not understand that 93% of the people in the province of Ontario gain permanent tax reduction associated with the initiatives that we're implementing, with a reduction on the first \$38,000 of income. That's especially impactful on average family income with \$80,000. Ninety thousand people will no longer pay personal tax, and 725,000 additional lower-income Ontarians would benefit from the Ontario tax reduction. A single parent with children who's benefiting from the Ontario child benefit will see that benefit nearly double. This is the content of the legislation. The honourable member talks only about process.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality that this Acting Premier refuses to talk about is that the harmonized sales tax is going to create men and women across this province who are going to pay more on the basic essentials of living. That's what this budget talks about. They'll pay more for gasoline. They'll pay more for heating and coffee, vitamins, taxis, shoes and haircuts. Middle-income home purchasers are going to be laden with a tax of thousands and thousands of dollars.

Ontarians are very clear when it comes to this budget. As workers are losing their jobs at unprecedented rates in this province, you should not be adding a new tax on families, simply and clearly. Why won't the government allow Ontarians to voice their very serious concerns, their legitimate concerns, through full and democratic discussion on this budget bill?

Hon. George Smitherman: We're taking the steps forward to put shovels in the ground to rebuild the infrastructure of the province of Ontario, to get people back to work, to double the Ontario child benefit, to make important progress in terms of the quality of public service in the province of Ontario.

That honourable member, in her question, talked about tax increases, but why does that honourable member sit amongst a group of people over there in that party who called for an increase in the provincial sales tax quite recently? Why is it okay on some days, but not on others, for the honourable member to be in favour of increases in personal sales taxes?

This is the honourable member's party, this is the honourable member's position, and today she talks only about process. The content of the legislation is to enhance the circumstances for the people of Ontario, to get past the economic challenges that are there by rebuilding our province. We are ready to get shovels in the ground, and we want to get on with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is a government's obligation to uphold democracy in the province of Ontario. Ontarians are rightfully concerned that the new HST is going to make it more difficult for them to make ends meet. But they're also opposed to it because it just doesn't seem fair. It doesn't seem fair to modest-income families that while their own significant tax burden is increasing, the McGuinty government is handing out \$4 billion to profitable corporations in this province. It doesn't seem fair that they are being hammered on every single purchase while large corporations and their million-dollar CEOs are getting massive tax breaks. Will the McGuinty government finally admit that this budget is unfair to modest-income Ontarians and allow Ontarians to express their outrage with full public hearings?

Hon. George Smitherman: We know that Ontarians have a high degree of emotional circumstance around economics. We know that there are many families that are hurting. That's why this budget moves forward in a fashion that gets them working again, that gets shovels in the ground and takes us forward in our province to make the biggest single initiative that is known possible to enhance the competitiveness in Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: Why does that party heckle so loudly against an overall reduction of \$10.6 billion in taxes for our people? Why are they so opposed to a tax cut for 93% of people on the first \$38,000 of income? Why do they yell and bang their desks so loudly in opposition to doubling the Ontario child benefit, to the benefit of children living in challenging circumstances with parents who don't make enough money? We are moving this budget forward, supporting Ontarians in challenging times and taking the steps to make us more competitive in the future.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, in Bill 162, the budget bill, the one for which you have introduced a closure motion, gives the finance minister the unilateral authority to cut a cheque of any size to the pension benefits guar-

antee fund. The 30% of Ontarians who are lucky enough to have a defined pension will benefit from this grant money. The other 70% of Ontarians, who will be paying 70% of the cheque and who aren't lucky enough to have any pension, and who have lost 30% to 40% of their RRSPs and their retirement income—my question to you, Deputy Premier, is, what assistance are you going to provide to this other 70% of Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman: This is an incredibly sensitive matter. It dates back to the establishment of this fund in 1981. The conditions of the fund are clear: It's substantially underfunded and has a maximum of \$1,000 a month of protection for any worker that might gain benefit from it.

Very much the sentiment that your question addressed was part and parcel of the Premier's comments earlier this morning, an event that I attended along with him and Minister Wynne related to the retrofit of schools. We entirely understand that there are many expectations about accessing a fund that, as we all know, is substantially underfunded. The Premier was very, very clear this morning in cautioning folks in making assumptions about what will be possible in these challenging economic times. We understand the challenging circumstances for the majority of people who do not enjoy pensions being asked to pony up resources in a circumstance where they're already struggling with their own reductions, and the Premier and our government are extraordinarily mindful of that challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I understand the comments of the Deputy Premier. But you're shutting down debate on Bill 162 and this very important part of that bill. If your finance minister decides to grant money to the pension benefits guarantee fund, an amount that could be as large as \$1 billion—you've already given them \$330 million in a loan in March 2004—the only time for debate in this Legislature will be a two-hour debate on the supply bill, with no hearings and no consideration for those who don't have a pension. We need a debate on this issue in full to provide protection for all Ontarians in their retirement—whether they have a defined benefit pension, or a pension or not a pension. Will you sever out this section of the bill so that pension reform can be fully considered by this Legislature, that there can be public hearings, that there—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Deputy?

1100

Hon. George Smitherman: At the heart of the matter, the honourable member asks for consideration, especially for those who may not be in the position of having a defined benefit pension. I have already—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: Like the majority of us, indeed.

That is why I said, in answer to the honourable member the first time around, that in comments this morning the Premier has reflected this very same cautionary tone.

However, I think the honourable member also knows that in these times, when the government of Ontario is a participant with the government of Canada in seeking to preserve the greatest proportion possible of the automotive sector, this matter is one piece of that puzzle, potentially. Accordingly, it's crucial that the government and the Minister of Finance have the latitude that may be necessary to address these circumstances going forward.

I give every assurance to the honourable member that our government's understanding about this circumstance and how it's so gnawing for so many people is first and foremost in our thinking.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Acting Premier: Here's another reason why the government may be closing down this crucial economic debate and allowing only one day of public hearings on a matter of such critical importance. In the fine print of the very budget bill that this government is ending debate on, refusing to have full public hearings on, are changes that leave a gaping hole in Ontario's pension protection legislation.

Is that what this government is afraid of, that Ontarians are going to know that their government is shredding the pension safety net just when pensioners and workers need it the most?

Hon. George Smitherman: I dare say, as one who has only been around this place for about a decade, that on the matter of pension circumstances in the province of Ontario, it's very difficult to find any political party that is absent for some of the responsibility.

The collective reality here, over many, many governments and over many, many decades, is that we have got a serious conundrum, a principle that seems to have been established of "too big to fail," which now affects organizations that are very possibly in that predicament.

I say to the honourable member, I agree that it's necessary for those of us in this Legislature to continue to focus on the efforts that can be made to stabilize the pension circumstance and to do our very best going forward to get past the kind of economic circumstances that have impaired so many families in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government has failed to protect pensions for the last five years in this province, and now workers are at risk of losing their pensions. We're talking about retirement monies that are owed to loyal workers in this province who have given their lifetime to their employers. And just when they need it the most, this government undermines the rules that are designed to protect Ontario pensions. Is that why this government is avoiding public hearings on their budget bill? Is it afraid that Ontarians are going to find out about its attack on their pension security?

Hon. George Smitherman: You'll notice, by way of a supplementary question, that the honourable member—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hold public hearings.

Hon. George Smitherman: —that the honourable member and her sidekicks—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Why is the government not holding public hearings?

Hon. George Smitherman: You'll note that the honourable member made no measure to more accurately—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Don't shut the door on the public.

Hon. George Smitherman: —to more accurately—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hold public hearings.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hold public hearings.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: I note that the honourable member, in her supplementary question, did nothing to acknowledge that the challenges that we face today with respect to pension law are the making over decades in this Legislature of various governments. She chooses to pretend that they weren't a government. But the people of the province of Ontario know that the pension circumstances that we face today are substantially the making—and there are people in her caucus who were senior members of the government that led to those circumstances.

We also think it's critically important that the 70% of people in the province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed for 10 minutes.

The House recessed from 1105 to 1115.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, ensuring all Ontarians are able to go to work each day without fear of violence or harassment in their workplace is a—

Interjections.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Perhaps, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Kenora—Rainy River is not helping the situation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We shall recess the House for 10 minutes, and the clock will continue to run.

The House recessed from 1121 to 1131.

Mr. David Zimmer: Round three.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Willowdale is not helping the situation.

The member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Ensuring all Ontarians are able to go to

work each day without fear of violence or harassment in their workplace is a matter of particular importance. It concerns me that members of the opposition don't care whether women go to work safely each day. Physical violence and harassment can have tremendously horrible consequences not only for workers but for their families and for society as a whole. It is something that I have previously proposed is appropriately guarded against in the Occupational Health And Safety Act, and I know that my constituents in Etobicoke—Lakeshore and all across the province do care whether women are safe and can go to work.

Minister, I know that you have brought in place policies and programs to address workplace violence and harassment and to keep women safe, and I would ask—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for her advocacy, for being a tremendous champion on this very important issue. I want to reassure the member and all Ontarians that our government takes this issue of workplace violence and harassment very seriously. We launched a consultation last fall—

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It's unfortunate that members opposite do not take this issue seriously and continue to heckle when we're talking about something that is very important to all hard-working Ontarians, the issue of violence and harassment in the workplace.

What this legislation will do, if passed, is require employers to put in place policies and procedures to address workplace violence and harassment. All Ontarians should be able to go to work every day and feel that they are in a healthy and safe environment. This legislation, if passed, would—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Pat Hoy: To the same minister: I'm glad to hear that our government is listening to the concerns of Ontario workers all across this province when it comes to harassment and violence in the workplace. Would you kindly inform the House and the public what else is proposed within this bill that will assist those workers here in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for being a great campaigner on this, for helping to create the climate—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What the member is doing is helping to create a climate in the workplace that we want to see where we say that violence and harassment will not be tolerated and will be dealt with. This proposed legislation would bring forward a number of issues that were discussed in our consultation. One of the things we'll allow is that now, if a worker feels he or she is in imminent danger of violence—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Deputy Premier, and you can obviously tell by the uproar in this House from the opposition parties—I suspect that if you had freethinking, free-acting backbenchers in the Liberal Party, you'd also hear the same uproar. If you'd allow public hearings—you're bringing in a closure motion this afternoon that allows one day on a budget that brings in the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario; one day of committee hearings on a budget that doubles the province's debt; one day for public hearings on the highest deficit in Ontario's history.

I listened to your members speak on this bill, particularly the other day the member from Guelph. I don't think she actually represented her constituents, because during the last week, constituency week, I heard about the McGuinty sales tax. We don't hear about that from your government members when they speak. You should go to places like Guelph and hold public hearings to hear from the people on what they really have to say about your budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Premier.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that it's great to know that—

Mr. Peter Kormos: —if the public can't hear you?

Interjection: Sure. Why hold public hearings?

Mr. Peter Kormos: You got pushbacks the day you read—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland will come to order, please. Deputy.

Hon. George Smitherman: I make the following points: He talked about free thinking. We wonder where the free thinking was when he was a member of a government that had a budget outside of this place and never had committee hearings associated with any initiative. He said that there's only one day of hearings. In fact, there are two. It shows the misinformation that the honourable member offers. At the heart of it, we think it's important to get on with making the investments that people need to get back to work, like an unprecedented level of investments in the form of infrastructure. That's what this budget is about and that's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: The honourable member likes to rewrite history. At least we had a budget that we weren't afraid to take out of the Legislature and go to the people of Ontario and hear what the people of Ontario had to say about it. We did have hearings. You're a democratic—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Government members are not helping the situation either. Please continue.

1140

Mr. Jim Wilson: We heard from the people of Ontario. We tabled our budget, we went out and we heard from the people of Ontario and we covered, many, many public hearings across this province, so the honourable

member is factually incorrect. I don't know why, when you're having such unprecedented moves—the tax grab that you said you wouldn't do, the broken promises, the unprecedented disgrace—you would ignore the people of Ontario. We're going to ask you in an amendment this afternoon—and I ask the Liberal backbenchers to consider the amendment—for the committee to go to places like Guelph and to government-held ridings.

Why don't you want your constituents to hear what you're going to vote on in this House? They have every right. It's a fundamental right of democracy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: We have to thank the honourable member for that doozer of a quote: "At least we had a budget that we weren't afraid to take out of the Legislature." They were held in contempt for the way that they presented their budget this year and that honourable member is still defending it.

As to taking a budget on the road as government members, having the opportunity to engage with constituents and the local media, I went to Red Lake, Thunder Bay, Timmins, North Bay, Kingston and Ottawa. Other members in their own ridings elsewhere travelled across the breadth of the province of Ontario. We have no challenge with going out there and making ourselves available. That's what members of this government do, and they tell people about the things that are embedded in this bill that you stand in opposition to. You don't want to move forward. The shovel's in the ground with unprecedented levels of infrastructure. You oppose the doubling of the Ontario child benefit and you will not acknowledge that 93% of Ontarians enjoy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The McGuinty budget failed on almost every single anti-poverty front: It had nothing on the \$10 minimum wage; there's no real social assistance rate increase until November; there's no healthy food supplement; there are no welfare roll changes; there's no child care; and there is no housing for anyone except seniors. Now the government is shutting down poor people's opportunity to respond to this budget by limiting hearings and amendments to one day. This government has already limited hearings on the poverty plan to six hours.

Why won't the McGuinty government allow low-income people to voice their concerns about this budget?

Hon. George Smitherman: On the day of the budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Premier.

Hon. George Smitherman: This budget takes action on the poverty agenda. I quote again from Pat Capponi of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction: "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits, and

child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians.”

Why is it that the members of that party—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member from Kenora–Rainy River to have some respect within this chamber, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: It’s a budget that Pat Capponi of the 25 in 5 poverty network said “has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits, and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians.” It doubles the Ontario child benefit, it increases social assistance rates and it gets us back in the business of making investments in fundamental infrastructure like housing. Today, on the floor of the Legislature, they bring their process of opposition to initiatives that are designed to get dollars out there and make a difference in the lives of people in the province of Ontario.

What is at stake here is action. What are they interested in? Animation. They’re talking about process, and the budget that we proudly present in this Legislature is about making essential investments in the people of Ontario. The largest single investments in infrastructure, doubling the Ontario child—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Amott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff

Murdoch, Bill
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Monique

Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Fonseca, Peter

Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Martiniuk, Gerry
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia

Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are zero.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as it’s named.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2010, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Dated Toronto, April 21, 2009.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Peter Shurman: April 19 marked the 66th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and yesterday I attended the 2009 Yom Hashoah V’Hagvurah Holocaust Remembrance Community Commemoration.

The central theme of this year’s commemoration was remembering the approximately 1.5 million Jewish children who were murdered by the Nazis. The chilling, rainy weather last night provided an appropriate backdrop for a sombre ceremony, during which children of the past who never had a future were honoured by children of that future who have learned from the past.

As survivors of the Holocaust honoured the victims by lighting candles, we also gathered to honour those righteous among the nations who didn’t fall prey to fear or indifference and who sheltered and saved Jewish families and children, risking their own lives and the lives of their families to do so.

Wladyslaw and Petronela Ziolo of Poland, along with their son Tadeusz, and the family of Catharina Develing of the Netherlands were honoured at last night’s ceremony as gentiles who defied the hatred, cruelty and fear that propelled the Nazi killing machine which terrorized

Europe. At one of the darkest times of human history, people like Wladyslaw, Petronela, Tadeusz and Catharina were rays of light and examples of the best that humanity has to offer.

Remembering our past is the only way to ensure that tragedies like the Holocaust are never again permitted to take place and that hatred will not again be the propeller of human activity. It is up to us to carry the memory of the tragedy of the Holocaust and other genocides and their victims forward and pass it on to future generations, and it is up to us to ensure that they never take place again.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today in the House to pay tribute, on behalf of all members and indeed all Ontarians, on the 83rd birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada and 14 other independent states that make up the modern British Commonwealth.

Her Majesty was born Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor on April 21, 1926. Her Majesty presides over a number of dependencies with a combined population of over 129 million citizens. Her Majesty ascended to the throne as Queen following the death of her father, King George VI, on February 6, 1952. The title of "Queen of Canada" was conferred on her in 1953 under the Royal Style and Titles Act. As our head of state, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is represented by Her Excellency the Governor General.

In 1957, she was the first monarch at the opening of the Parliament of Canada. She inaugurated the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 with President Eisenhower. In 1961, she placed the inaugural call on the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable to Prime Minister John Diefenbaker from Buckingham Palace, asking, "Are you there, Mr. Prime Minister?" In 1967, she took part in the centennial of Confederation celebrations and was the sovereign of the newly created Order of Canada.

Queen Elizabeth II has always maintained strong and historic ties with our country, and wherever she goes on visits she is warmly received with love and grace by all of our citizens. She has made 30 visits to various parts of our country. We have inherited a great institution in the Westminster-style democracy, and our ties across the Atlantic remain as strong as they were a century ago.

On behalf of everyone here today, I want to wish her a very happy 83rd birthday and many more birthdays to come.

VILLAGE OF MANOTICK

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Our village of Manotick celebrates its 150th birthday this year, but right now many residents in Manotick are not celebrating. That's because one unelected bureaucrat at the OMB overturned a decision by our democratically elected city council which would have prevented doubling our village by adding 1,400 new homes.

Hundreds of my constituents have e-mailed or called me in protest of the OMB's unilateral decision for a variety of reasons. To begin with, it contradicts the secondary plan of our village. Another major concern is the unsustainable traffic levels in the village, especially without the support for building the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge.

I look forward to meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, along with Councillor Glenn Brooks, this week to discuss all legislative options this chamber has to either overturn the OMB decision or to amend elements of it. I look forward to meeting with him to discuss the tools that he has. Under the previous Conservative administration, former cabinet ministers, from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and our current Leader of the Opposition, successfully overturned or varied OMB decisions. It is a cabinet prerogative; there are precedents set.

We will also be urging him to support the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge. With the addition of 1,400 new homes in our community, this bridge will be critical for Manotick, Barrhaven and Riverside South.

NISKA NORTH MILL

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Last Wednesday, people from Wawa, Manitouwadge, White River, Dubreuilville and Hornepayne gathered in Chapleau to celebrate provincial support for Niska North. Niska North is a mill utilizing cedar logs that up until now have been making their way to Quebec. These logs will now be utilized by Niska North to provide value-added products.

Niska North was a dream of Wade Cachagee and his partner, Kevin Lindquist. The mill is situated in a building that was once part of the Domtar mill. The mill is a state-of-the-art facility which will grow to employ up to 40 people—40 good jobs.

In 2007, the McGuinty government invested \$320,000 in the project through the forest prosperity fund. Our great friend, the Honourable Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and I were pleased that the Premier, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, attended the event to announce an additional \$1.5 million to support this locally owned and managed initiative.

Most people in attendance also remember the \$2-million prosperity fund investment in the neighbouring Tembec sawmill, making it more competitive and efficient, supporting a three-shift operation.

Yesterday, I was therefore extraordinarily surprised by the uninformed attack by the naysaying leader of the NDP, the third party. Surely the member for Hamilton Centre will rise and apologize to the people of Chapleau and the rural north for mocking their future.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: This government has embarked on a campaign to dismantle our health care system. Rather than attack waste in government, they choose to attack the health care system. I stand again to question this government's plan for Cambridge Memorial

Hospital, St. Mary's hospital and Grand River Hospital. When will you implement a fair funding formula not only for Cambridge hospital, but for all hospitals across the province that are struggling with inadequate funding levels?

On April 29, busloads of my constituents will travel here to the Ontario Legislature to voice their concerns about the future of our hospital, a hospital they are very passionate about preserving. They will not let this government dismantle their hospital. Buses will leave from the Cambridge Newfoundland Club at 10 a.m. Seats are still available and can be reserved by calling my office.

This government has committed to helping fund a long-awaited expansion at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital. Again, I ask, when will you keep your promise and allow this expansion to proceed? My riding is part of Waterloo region, which now has the second-highest unemployment rate in Ontario. With a jobless rate of 9.6%, why doesn't this government rise to the occasion and help the people of Waterloo region? Allow the expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital to go ahead and put some of our many unemployed citizens back to work.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This week there were two fascinating articles in the Toronto Star about energy. Today, the headline read, "Now Province Pays to Give Away Electricity." That should have been a front page story, not a story in the business pages. Tyler Hamilton reported that Ontario had to pay customers to take power.

In Mississauga South, the residents are fighting against a peaker plant proposed by this Liberal government. I don't know how the government can go forward with that plant knowing that they are going to have to pay people—customers—to take power.

In northern York region, in the Holland Marsh, people are fighting against a peaker plant. Again, they know that Ontario has to pay people money to take power.

This government is headed down a blind alley, down a dead end on power. It is committed to nuclear, and because of that commitment, it is going to be in a position of either overproduction or making sure that investment in conservation and green power are pushed to the side.

Interestingly, the other article Tyler Hamilton wrote this week about the Green Energy Act says that in fact, because green energy producers wouldn't be able to sell continuously—there was no guarantee of market—far fewer would be interested in investing in Ontario because they didn't know if they would be able to sell their power.

This direction of the Liberal government, their nuclear direction, is a disaster.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yesterday morning I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new emergency mental health unit at the Guelph General Hospital. In

2007, our government announced funding to renovate a section of the hospital to provide a secure place to assess and treat patients with mental illness.

Prior to this investment, Guelph General Hospital did not have mental health programming, emergency psychiatric assessment or treatment capacity. Patients with a mental illness who presented to the hospital in extreme distress were at times handcuffed to a bed and supervised by police. We know that patients with a mental illness deserve better than that.

The new secure emergency mental health unit has four observation rooms, two interview rooms, a meeting room, a washroom, a shower, two offices and a new nurses' observation station. Renovation will also provide the main emergency department with additional examination rooms for other patients. The emergency mental health unit will be jointly staffed by Guelph General and the Homewood psychiatric hospital. Trellis, our local community mental health clinic, will provide support for patients who can be released after emergency treatment.

Our local health care providers have worked very hard on building this unique partnership. On behalf of the people of Guelph, I would like to thank them for creating a safe and caring space for our mental health patients.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Dave Levac: It's indeed a pleasure to rise today in the House to offer a warm welcome to the representatives of the Ontario Chiropractic Association who are with us in the Legislature today. It might be of interest to you to know that the OCA represents approximately 2,800 of the province's practising chiropractors. As accomplished health professionals who deliver care for over 1.2 million patients, including myself, in this province, chiropractors provide diagnosis, treatment and preventative care for disorders related to the spine, pelvis, nervous system and the joints. The OCA members are committed to educating patients and the public about their health while empowering them to make informed decisions about treatment options and their overall wellness.

This is the first Queen's Park Day that the OCA has held. Groups of chiropractors will be meeting today with MPPs and government officials to talk about some of the major issues affecting the profession in Ontario today, and to share experiences from our various constituencies.

Of course, it would not be a Queen's Park Day without the OCA's reception for all MPPs. A number of the OCA members have travelled from ridings all across the province to be here today to let us know how they are making a difference in our communities. I encourage each and every member of this House to attend the reception that the Ontario Chiropractic Association is hosting this evening here in the legislative dining room from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., so that you can meet the OCA representatives from your area. I was pleased to sponsor this event and I encourage and hope to see you all there this evening.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. David Zimmer: Today the Jewish lunar calendar marks Yom Hashoah, in recognition of the systemic persecution and murder of European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. The Jewish community mourns the tremendous loss of talent, knowledge, potential, and ultimately, the loss of human life. Elie Wiesel said, "To remain silent and indifferent is the greatest sin of all."

In this spirit, let us renew our commitment to fighting moral injustice and ensure that the six million who perished in the Holocaust did not die in vain. We must not remain silent on issues of discrimination and intolerance. We must speak out against crimes against humanity and genocide.

I am proud that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America to officially commemorate the Holocaust. Ontario has a large community of Holocaust survivors who have made enduring and invaluable contributions to our province.

On behalf of the Premier of Ontario and the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, I urge my colleagues to attend a special Holocaust memorial ceremony in the Legislature next Thursday at 12 noon.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT
(FIREFIGHTERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES
ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (POMPIERS)

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters / *Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui a trait aux pompiers.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Ted Arnott: This being volunteer week, I think it's timely to introduce this bill, which amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. Section 15.1 of the act contains presumptions that if a worker who is prescribed by the regulations made under the act sustains an injury to the heart or is impaired by a disease, the injury or disease is presumed to have arisen out of the worker's employment as a firefighter or a fire investigator. At present, under the regulations, the presumptions apply only to full-time firefighters. The bill would make the presumptions applicable to all firefighters, including volunteer firefighters, without the need to make a regulation.

A regulation can still make the presumptions applied to fire investigators or other workers and/or still impose conditions and restrictions on the presumptions. I would encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: April 19 to 25 is National Volunteer Week. We set aside this week every year to pay tribute to the millions of Ontarians who volunteer and make a difference in their communities.

Right now in Hamilton, a volunteer is driving a dialysis patient for treatment. Earlier this morning in Sudbury, volunteers served a nutritious meal at a school breakfast program. And this weekend, groups all over Ontario will get together to help build homes.

Every hour, every day and in every part of Ontario, volunteers generously give their time and skills to make this province a better place for all of us. For several years, we have celebrated their contributions through awards and ceremonies. We also have some exciting programs to help sustain and build volunteerism by including young people and newcomers in this fine tradition.

Our showcase event this year is the 2009 ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge, which we launched as a pilot project in 2008. Once again, we are partnering with the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network and 19 of its volunteer centres with the goal of getting 10,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 18 to volunteer during National Volunteer Week.

There are lots of opportunities all over Ontario, such as participating in a community clean-up in Belleville or a sing-song at a seniors' home in Thunder Bay or helping to clear a trail in Guelph. I urge young people to find out about volunteer events in their community and volunteer some of their time to these worthy causes.

Several weeks ago, I told members of this House about the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards, our province's annual recognition of volunteers. Later this week, 20 fine Ontarians will receive the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism. Yesterday morning, eight young Ontarians were invested with the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

Ontario's volunteers give both their time and their hearts. We are privileged to have such a tradition of volunteerism in this province. National Volunteer Week is our opportunity to show them how much they are appreciated.

1520

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING
SUBVENTIONS POUR LES ARTS
ET LA CULTURE

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Strengthening the impact of our creative sector as a major economic driver is a key

priority for this government. In order to succeed and effectively compete in the global economy, our government is enhancing the growth and success of our creative industries.

Nous savons qu'un secteur des arts actif et florissant permet de créer des collectivités dynamiques qui attirent des investisseurs et les travailleurs du secteur du savoir les plus talentueux.

We know that an active and thriving arts sector creates vibrant, dynamic communities that attract investors and the most talented knowledge workers. They also make our communities better places in which to live.

I'm delighted to advise the Legislature this afternoon that the McGuinty government is providing a \$5-million increase in annual base funding to the Ontario Arts Council this year. This investment is part of the \$20-million enhancement to the council's base funding which was announced in 2007-08. This investment brings the council's annual budget to almost \$60 million this year. That represents a 140% increase since 2003.

This investment in the Ontario Arts Council reflects our government's recognition that artists and arts organizations are essential players in the creative economy. The Ontario Arts Council builds that creative economy from the ground up by developing and promoting our province's significant pool of talented artists. In 2007-08, the council funded 1,300 individual artists and 874 organizations in 252 communities across Ontario.

One of these organizations is Sunfest, a popular world music festival in London, Ontario, which features artists and musicians from right across the province and, indeed, from all around the world. It's so popular, in fact, that attendance has exploded from 10,000 people in the first year to 200,000 last year—that's a 20-fold increase—making Sunfest a major cultural tourism attraction. By attracting thousands of visitors from across Ontario and the US, Sunfest also helps fill hotel rooms and restaurants, and feeds, of course, into all of the job creation activities of those enterprises in the community. The festival is just one of the many success stories that Ontario is proud to support through the Ontario Arts Council.

En mettant en vedette les arts et la culture au Canada et à l'étranger, nous renforçons non seulement l'industrie, mais nous stimulons aussi la création d'emplois et nous assurons la prospérité de nos collectivités.

Showcasing our arts and culture at home and abroad not only strengthens the industry, but it also stimulates job creation and brings prosperity to our communities. Between 1999 and 2007, Ontario's entertainment and creative cluster created almost 80,000 new jobs in Ontario. That is an increase of almost 40%, compared with 17% in the overall Ontario economy.

Our increased support to the Ontario Arts Council builds on this government's investment of \$47 million in its seven cultural attraction agencies, which was announced earlier this month. For the first time in more than a decade, all of our cultural attractions received a

boost in annual operating grants that will allow them to offer more of the world-class programs and collections that attract millions of visitors each year.

These investments in Ontario's growing creative sector are part of this government's plan to strengthen our economy and compete very successfully indeed on the world stage.

En investissant dans les industries des arts et de la culture en Ontario, nous améliorons la qualité de vie de nos collectivités et nous assurons un avenir plus radieux à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Indeed, by investing in Ontario's arts and cultural industries, we are improving the quality of life in our communities and creating a brighter future for all Ontarians.

Merci. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to commend the Minister of Citizenship for his kind words in celebration of the volunteer community. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to also recognize National Volunteer Week and all the great work that volunteers do throughout our society here in the province of Ontario.

Over five million Ontarians volunteer yearly, contributing over 800 million annual volunteer hours. When I took a look at that statistic, I decided to do the math. That is the equivalent of 20 million 40-hour employee weeks, or 400,000 full-time jobs.

The volunteer rate in Ontario of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 is 63%. That is remarkable when you consider that people of that age tend to be otherwise occupied. Those numbers have actually doubled since the year 2000.

Events are being held across Ontario and Canada, celebrating volunteers. Volunteers help in every facet of our society, working in areas from schools, hospitals, police and fire services, churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, to Scouts, Girl Guides and athletic clubs.

I myself have been part of a number of volunteer organizations, and I know the commitment needed to have everything run as smoothly as possible. I know that every member of this Legislative Assembly does as well.

Our society could not exist as we know it without the contribution of volunteers. In fact, last Saturday evening, I had the pleasure of awarding \$37,000 from Trillium to the Filipino-Canadian Association of Vaughan. That did come from Trillium, which, I might remind members, was founded in 1982 by Premier Bill Davis and bumped up dramatically in 1995 by the Harris government.

There is no amount of money that could replace the commitment and hours that these individuals give. Like the minister, I look forward each year to assisting in recognizing worthy Ontarians with our province's volunteer service awards. I relish this opportunity to offer my small thanks for their hard work and dedication.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'm very pleased to offer comments in regard to the minister's presentation.

In our caucus, we recognize the importance of the arts. We recognize that the arts are really the mirror that we put in front of ourselves to reflect who we are. Art helps us to dream, and dreaming helps foster creativity. It is that, then, which is the impetus behind seeing the arts as a stimulation to innovation.

However, the minister needs to go beyond re-announcements, as this is, and take action. As the former government, we introduced Learning Through the Arts to be able to provide children in this province with the opportunity to derive the best that they can from learning through the arts.

We also supported the passage of the amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act, but have not yet seen the minister take action—as she is able to, in terms of declaring any of the sites that are on that very slippery slope of demolition, or frankly, destruction—that she can take as part of the Heritage Act.

I also wonder, when the minister in her own remarks talks about the creative economy and the creative industries, if those industries have recognized at the same time the 8% tax increase that is going to follow the artists and the artistic events. Every time someone goes to a movie theatre, it will be 8% more. The new tax is a tax on Ontario's filmmakers and all the industries that support them. Actors, directors, set designers and others will all be hurt by this tax. Every theatre performance will cost 8% more. Every visit to a museum or an art gallery will cost 8% more. Then we're faced with the fact now that you're going to shut down the debate on the budget bill. The government wants to put an 8% tax on our culture but is not willing to debate it in this House. It is time for the minister to stand up for Ontario's artists, culture and heritage and tell the Premier and the finance minister that an 8% tax on culture is wrong.

1530

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and talk about our incredible volunteers in the province. We've heard how many there are. We've heard how much they give. I'm well aware of that in Parkdale-High Park; I'm sure we are in all of our ridings. However, there's a problem here, because it used to be that volunteers volunteered their time, energy and their money because they wanted to. Now, across Ontario they volunteer because they have to. That is a result of the McGuinty government and what it has not done in terms of meeting the basic needs of Ontarians. Hence, we have people volunteering in food banks. They are there not because they want to see food banks but because they have to be there. Those men and women who are working in low-wage jobs who can't

afford to pay the rent and feed their children have to use food banks. Volunteers have to work in them.

They volunteer in hospitals because the McGuinty government won't hire enough health care staff to keep every patient getting the care they need and that they require. So family and friends have to spend the time looking after their loved ones at the worst possible time of that loved one's life because there's not enough staff in place to do the job.

If you look at our schools, you'll see places where volunteers raise about \$600 million every year simply to keep the system going. Do they do that because they want to? No, they do it because they have to. If they didn't do it, they wouldn't have playgrounds, they wouldn't have extracurricular activities, and their children would not get the education they deserve and need.

We as Ontarians have the right, under the Canadian charter, to life, liberty and security. We also have the right, under the UN charters, to homes, food, clothing, education and quality health care. It is the job of government to provide those services; it is not the job of volunteers. So if this government really wants to honour its volunteers, what it will do is take up the task and the responsibility that is its alone, and that is to look after its citizenry so that many who are already overtaxed—we heard why with this BST—who are already overburdened, who are already underemployed don't have to volunteer under the McGuinty Liberal government.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address the remarks of the Minister of Culture. There's no question that in our party we've long recognized that artists and the arts community are essential to creating vibrant communities and, frankly, are an essential part of the economy of this province. They could be a much bigger part of this province with the right kind of support.

The NDP supports the investment in the Ontario Arts Council. We welcome the announcement and we thank the artists who I know have lobbied tirelessly to increase the funding available to the arts sector in this province. That said, New Democrats are concerned that the McGuinty Liberals have failed to understand the need for comprehensive support for Ontario's artists by dealing with laws regarding their labour status. There's no question that investing in the Ontario Arts Council is essential, but the efforts with regard to the arts have to go beyond the Ontario Arts Council.

Just yesterday, members were here in this chamber from ACTRA, talking about the three steps that need to be taken to protect the arts community in Ontario to enhance their situation: Implement a collective bargaining process for the arts sector, amend the Employment Standards Act to include artists, and institute legally binding regulations that can protect child actors.

We know that these changes are needed. It was acknowledged by the Minister of Culture's own advisory council in 2006 that the average annual earnings of

Ontario artists are around \$26,800 per year, almost a quarter less than the overall labour force in Ontario. Artists in many Ontario cities earn less than \$20,000, despite the fact that the percentage of artists with post-secondary qualifications is nearly double that of the overall workforce.

Ontario's artists deserve a commitment to move forward on the issues of collective bargaining, employment standards and protection for child actors. It's matters like these that will determine whether people will come into the arts and contribute their talent and creativity to building this sector. Ontario has got to move forward on this. New Democrats call on the McGuinty government to follow through on their promise to Ontario's artists to bring forward these needed changes.

On Thursday, this government will have a chance to vote in favour of my bill, Bill 165, which will address the matter of employment standards for artists, and I call on them to support it.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lake-ridge ... site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take the necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present this to Corey, one of the new pages here in the Legislature.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased today to bring forward a petition from my friend Stan Maclean, who lives in Galesburg in beautiful Lakefield, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Cooper.

TUITION

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest in all of the provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the last 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

"Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law or medicine pay as much ... as \$20,000 per year; and

"Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce the opportunity for many low- and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

"Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college and university; and

"Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government's Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to immediately drop tuition fees to 2004 levels and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a new framework that:

"(1) Reduces tuition and ancillary fees annually for students.

"(2) Converts a portion of every student loan into a grant.

"(3) Increases per student funding above the national average."

I appreciate having been sent this petition and I will sign it.

1540

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the Green Energy and Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with this and affix my signature to it and give it to page Cameron who's here with me today.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the Burk's Falls health centre, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk's Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

"Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

"Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka—East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk's Falls health centre;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk's Falls health centre."

I support this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 2009 is a reassessment year in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the assessments will be phased in over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012; and

"Whereas the assessed values for current value assessments collected as at January 1, 2008, were obtained during years of high real estate activity in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the downturn in the current global economic climate has greatly affected the real estate market, and subsequently, the assessed values in the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Finance for the province of Ontario roll back assessed values to the base year of January 1, 2005."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Cooper.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Kuldip Kular: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the Green Energy and Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with the petition, so I put my signature on it as well.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I've got several hundred names here on petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

The title is: Nichols Gravel Ltd., Petition for Justice and MNR Compliance to OMB and ARA Legislation.

"Whereas officials of MNR Aylmer district illegally imposed on licence 103717 without legislative or delegated authority pre-conditions to be completed prior to operation of the quarry which in fact were impossible to complete without quarry operations, and then used ARA legislation to revoke the licence for non-compliance, when to this date no 'operational licence' has yet been delivered to Nichols Gravel Ltd. under direction of OMB order 1194;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"For an order to the Ministry of Natural Resources to cease all illegal enforcement and to comply with legislation of the OMB Act s 86(1) Cayuga file 148/07 Superior Court judgment order, OMB order 1194 and the Aggregate Resources Act, and reinstate Nichols quarry lic. 103717, illegally revoked September 30, 2004, based upon MNR enforcement of 23 specific pre-operational conditions not identified or directed in OMB decision order 1194 or the licence signed by the minister March 25, 2003."

The reference is www.injusticecanada.com.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from my good friend John Sheehan who lives on Homewood Avenue in Peterborough.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic, original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to it and give it to page Cooper.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat,

telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I have signed this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm presenting a petition on behalf of a number of people in the trucking business: Laura O'Neill and Joanne Ritchie and Jim Park; there's a number of people. I'll read the petition. It's on the speed limiter issue, connected with the long continuous vehicle, the LCV.

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being" approximately "120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country" and to help the economy.

I'm pleased to sign in support and present this to Cameron, one of the new pages.

1550

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls, I'd like to read this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and thank the Lupus Foundation of Ontario for having sent it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

"Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease

are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

"Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause ... life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

"We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario."

On behalf of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Simcoe—Grey.

SALES TAX

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas potential automobile customers in North America are having trouble accessing credit and loans; and

"Whereas the automotive industry is having difficulty selling vehicles;

"We, the undersigned, petition provincial, federal and state governments to implement a sales tax holiday on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks."

I agree with the petition, and I've signed it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget matters and other matters, when the bill is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That—

Mr. Howard Hampton: What are you trying to hide?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Perhaps the member could take his seat if he's going to object?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask all members of the House to allow the government House leader to read the motion. I need to hear what she's saying, and I return to the government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day, pursuant to standing order 9(c), no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, May 7, 2009, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and on Thursday, May 14, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on Monday, May 11, 2009. At 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2009, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, May 25, 2009. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, on the day the order for third reading of the bill is called, 65 minutes shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, with 20 minutes apportioned to each of the recognized parties and five minutes to any independent member. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the government House leader to lead off the debate.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I am pleased to lead off the debate today, and I will be sharing my time with a number of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I tried to get in just before the member started her debate, because this is when I should—what I'm asking, on a point of order, is if I could have unanimous consent to have two minutes to

speak on this motion before the rotation starts. I'm asking for unanimous consent to allow me two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to speak for two minutes—immediately after the government House leader, I gather? Is it agreed? Agreed.

I return to the government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Huron–Bruce and a couple of my other colleagues.

I'm pleased today to speak to motion 116, moving forward the debate on our budget bill, Bill 162. I think it's a very important debate that we've been having in this Legislature. I think there has been a lot of good input, and I think it's time to move forward with the budget bill. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues on this point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I appreciate the House allowing me just a couple of minutes to speak on this motion.

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke on a similar one—it was a closure bill—and I mentioned to the House that it would be nice if they would recognize the independent members. There may be more than me at some time, and there may not be.

I am pleased to stand here today and thank the member from North Bay for listening to me. I appreciate the fact that they added the independents into this motion. It certainly shows that you are trying to get along with us.

This motion may not go over well with everybody, because it is a closure motion. I've been here for some time. These things happen, and all parties do it from time to time. It's unfortunate; I wish we could have a House where we didn't need to do this.

But I do want to acknowledge the fact that you have included the independents in there, so that when the budget bill does come back, I will have some time to speak on it, whereas in the past, if there were independents here—and there have been; in my 18 years here, there have been independents in the House—they weren't given that chance to speak on it. So I really appreciate that. Hopefully, we don't have a whole lot more like this, that you have to do that.

I think it's a bit of a historical moment. I may be the independent, but I don't believe this has been done before in this House. Maybe somebody can show me a time allocation motion that says they recognize the independents, but in my 18 years, I don't remember one coming in, so I think it's a bit of a historical moment.

I'm pleased to stand here and thank you for doing that. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Speaking to this closure motion, I can say that we're somewhat shocked. First of all, the government, during House leaders', really gave no notice that they were going to do this on their budget. If they're

so proud of the budget, then why are they bringing in a closure motion, or a time allocation motion, to close down debate? Should not the government be taking an opportunity, through the Standing Committee on Finance, to go out to the people of Ontario, to travel with their budget bill, to explain the largest tax grab in Ontario's history to date?

Dalton McGuinty was elected in the 2003 election, and he said he wouldn't raise our taxes. Then, of course, we got the record, at that time, the highest single tax increase in the history of Ontario, called the health premium or health tax. Then again, in the 2007 election, after spending a lot of time before the election, and in TV ads and marketing during the election campaign, saying that he wouldn't raise our taxes again—he also said he wouldn't lower them, but he wouldn't raise them.

Though not technically in the budget bill, certainly that was the major plank in the finance minister's speech to this Legislature about the budget. The most hype around the budget has been about Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax.

As we said today during question period, it's a time that families are hit very, very hard in this province—unprecedented in my lifetime and unprecedented, really, since the Great Depression—and the government decides to pick their pockets, very deeply. People probably don't realize, or may not realize, that their electricity is going to go up 8% beginning Canada Day next year. Gasoline will go up 32 cents a gallon, for people who remember gallons. That is just unprecedented—up overnight. When it goes up one or two cents a litre now, people go crazy. Gasoline alone will certainly go up about 7 or 8 cents per litre overnight.

1600

Cable, train fares, vitamins, newspapers and magazines, haircuts, postage stamps, home renovations, dry cleaning, car washes and veterinary care: The list is pages and pages long, and these are just some of the examples of things that you don't pay the 8% provincial sales tax on now, but will in the future. Bringing your kids to school, picking them up at school and getting your morning coffee are all going to cost you more money. Meals under \$4, which are currently exempt from the provincial sales tax, will cost you more money, 8% more beginning, as I said, July 1.

I remember when Dalton McGuinty, after the 2003 election—Greg Sorbara was the finance minister, and he tried to bring in the provincial sales tax on meals \$4 and under. Tim Hortons and McDonald's and the opposition parties were successful in getting the public motivated to challenge the government on that and they backed down.

Just in conclusion, people ask me, because I have an online petition at www.jimwilsonmpp.com, "Is it any good signing the petition?" I can tell you that there has got to be a number of Liberal backbenchers and cabinet ministers who are hearing the same things that we are, as we go throughout our ridings and throughout Ontario, that people are shocked and they don't like this new tax. They say to me, "Well, if you want to give a break to

manufacturers that's fine. But why are you dragging all consumers into this?" This has been studied by other governments. It was recently studied by Saskatchewan, and they came to the conclusion that it would cost their economy and their consumers too much money, so they didn't introduce it. Of course, governments of all stripes have looked at bringing in a harmonized sales tax in this province and the cost to consumers is too great.

So, as we said in question period today, on behalf of the PC caucus I'd like to introduce the following amendment to the government's closure motion:

That the motion moved by the government House leader on April 21, 2009, be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph, by adding, "The bill shall be debated for a further eight hours, after which" after the phrase, "when the bill is next called as a government order;" and

By deleting the third paragraph and replacing it with, "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet as follows:

"—on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Thursday, April 30, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, in Peterborough; and

"—on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, in Belleville; and

"—on Thursday, May 7, 2009, in Cornwall; and

"—on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, in Ottawa; and

"—on Wednesday, May 13, 2009, in Guelph; and

"—on Thursday, May 14, 2009, in London; and

"—on Tuesday, May 19, 2009, in Windsor; and

"—on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, in Goderich; and

"—on Thursday May 21, 2009, in North Bay

"for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and on May 25 and 26, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and" and

In the fourth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 11, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, May 20, 2009" and by deleting "Thursday, May 14, 2009" and replacing it with "Thursday, May 28, 2009"; and

In the fifth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 25, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, June 3, 2009"; and

In the seventh paragraph, by deleting "65 minutes" and replacing it with "10 hours."

That's the end of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved that the motion moved by the government House leader on April 21, 2009, be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph, by adding, "The bill shall be debated for a further eight hours, after which" after the phrase, "when the bill is next called as a government order;" and

By deleting the third paragraph and replacing it with, "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet as follows:

"—on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Thursday, April 30, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, in Peterborough; and

"—on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, in Belleville; and

"—on Thursday, May 7, 2009, in Cornwall; and

"—on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, in Ottawa; and

"—on Wednesday, May 13, 2009, in Guelph; and

"—on Thursday, May 14, 2009, in London; and

"—on Tuesday, May 19, 2009, in Windsor; and

"—on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, in Goderich; and

"—on Thursday May 21, 2009, in North Bay

"for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and on May 25 and 26, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and" and

In the fourth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 11, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, May 20, 2009" and by deleting "Thursday, May 14, 2009" and replacing it with "Thursday, May 28, 2009"; and

In the fifth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 25, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, June 3, 2009"; and

In the seventh paragraph, by deleting "65 minutes" and replacing it with "10 hours."

I'll return to the member for Simcoe-Grey if he wishes to speak to his motion.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just to remind people, what the government has done this afternoon is they have limited the debate on a \$108-billion budget with the largest tax increases in Ontario's history, doubling the debt throughout this budget period in the province of Ontario to almost \$200 million. Our interest payments on that debt will be over \$11 billion, or \$1 million per hour, every hour of every day, 365 days a year. We will simply pay that out in interest, mainly to New York bondholders, as a result of this government's budget. I think they should go out to the people of Ontario and not limit the debate on such an important matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France G  linas: I usually start by saying it is my pleasure to talk, but today I don't think it is a pleasure, because this has to do with a time allocation motion. Basically, what a time allocation motion does is it shuts down debate on the budget at a time when Ontario is facing a recession, when people are worried, when they are looking to their government for help and also to be heard. The government has answered back, "We don't want to hear from you. We know you're suffering, and we feel for you, but we don't want to hear you."

I can't believe that we are doing that to the people of Ontario. People have the right to be heard, and they have the right to be heard on motions that are as important as the budget. Everybody looks to the budget to see what the government is going to do. This is how the government translates their actions—by how they distribute their budget.

Last week, I was in my riding and I had the opportunity to visit my constituents in Foleyet. Foleyet is a tiny little community in the north end of my riding, not too far from Chapleau, actually. They depend mainly on the forestry industry. You won't be surprised that there is a very high level of unemployment in Foleyet. There are now 120 households left in Foleyet, as everybody who has lost their job has moved on. Well, the expenses in

Foleyet are not going down. They have a water plant with a contract that costs us \$100,000 a year to maintain so that they have safe drinking water, like everybody else in Ontario, of course. When there are only 120 households left to pay the local services board, that's not a whole lot of money. They also have to pay taxes for a roads board to maintain their roads. Again, those expenses don't go down a whole lot when the number of people able to pay goes down. Those people were looking at the budget, and they would like to see a forestry strategy that would help them gain employment. Unfortunately, they won't have an opportunity to tell the government what they want, because the government has put forward a time allocation motion that will prevent them from being heard.

From Foleyet, I went to Mattagami First Nation. Mattagami is a beautiful First Nation built on the side of a lake. The lake was still frozen and people were still ice fishing when I was there. It was a beautiful day.

1610

But that's pretty well all that was beautiful, because there's a 70% unemployment rate in Mattagami. That's a lot of people unemployed. They used to work in the forestry industry. There are no forestry jobs left for them. A lot of people came to see me to talk about their hydro bill and a lot of them are not going to be able to pay their hydro bill for many months to come, because there is no income coming in but the bills keep coming in. They wanted to talk to me about this but they also wanted to talk to me about the blended sales tax. They are worried about this and they want to be heard. They don't want any part of this and they came and told their MPP what they certainly would like to tell the government.

That was Mattagami. I then went to Gogama. Gogama is a lovely little community, also in my riding, just off Highway 144, between Sudbury and Timmins. The people in Gogama have also depended on the forestry industry to make a living. On one little street in Gogama there are 10 houses. Six of them had a "For Sale" sign and one was abandoned because the people didn't have a hope of selling their house.

When the school opened and we went and visited it, there were only four kids left in the English-language school because everybody else has moved out. There are no jobs left in Gogama. Again, the people of Gogama depend on the forestry industry. They would like to tell their government that they have ideas as to how we can help, a good strategy that would help to give those people jobs in forestry, but they won't have an opportunity to be heard.

When you go to Gogama, the first thing you see is Le Vagabond. It used to be a big restaurant. It is closed, and the sign is now hanging upside down. It looks pretty bad. The one and only gas station is now closed down. You cannot buy gas in Gogama anymore. You have to prepare ahead and bring jerry cans with you because, if you live in Gogama and you need gas, you need to go to the Watershed, which is about a 25-minute drive out of there, or hopefully you have enough gas to make it to Timmins, which is about an hour and a half, an hour and three quarters north of where they are.

There's very little left in Gogama, but they took the time to come and talk to their MPP, to talk to me, because they have ideas for forestry that would help them get jobs. They also would like to be heard, but the government decided to put forward a time allocation motion, which means that the good people of Gogama won't have a chance to be heard.

They wanted to talk to me about the blended sales tax. They don't want anything to do with this. They don't want it. It is a tax that they feel is unfair and that comes at a bad time. They see it as an 8% tax grab from their government at a time when they're having a really tough time. Yet those people won't have an opportunity to be heard either.

From Gogama, I went more to the east end of my riding to a community called Skead. Skead is also a beautiful community. It is built on the shore of Lake Wahnapiatae. Lake Wahnapiatae is a beautiful lake. It's a great, big soup bowl about eight miles around, very, very deep and just beautiful. Anybody who's ever flown to Sudbury would have seen Lake Wahnapiatae because the airport was built just beside it. It was built near Skead.

The people of Skead also wanted to talk to me. A lot of them came and talked to me about MPAC, how their taxes had gone up and their wages didn't go up. Lots of people in Skead worked at the Xstrata Nickel mine, which has laid off people. So you're looking at people who have lost their jobs and seen, through MPAC, that their municipal taxes have gone up tremendously, but they also came to tell me that they oppose the blended sales tax. It is the wrong tax at the wrong time. They don't want anything to do with it. But here again, the government decided to put forward a time allocation motion. Those people won't have an opportunity to come and be heard by their government, to feel that their government listens to their concerns and can act on their behalf, because the government is shutting down the opportunity for people to address this House.

From Skead, I went to Garson. Garson is another lovely community in my riding. In Garson I had the pleasure to meet with daycare operators, who decided to come and see me. The daycare operators were really disappointed that child care was not mentioned in the budget bill, because it is something that brings a lot of anxiety to their workers. Early childhood educators don't make a lot of money. A lot of their salary is top-up allocations, but they're not base salary increases. They would have liked to have seen something in the government budget that would help them, but they didn't.

In Garson I also had a nice visit. I have this 90-year-old constituent. Actually, she couldn't come to see me because she didn't have a ride, so I went to see her. She's as sharp as anything, and she follows politics. Anyway, she's very up to date on all the subjects of the day. She wanted to talk to me because she wanted to make sure that I knew that she opposed this blended sales tax. She's on a fixed income. She has been retired for a long time. Actually, she lives on her husband's pension, and her husband passed away many years ago.

She wanted to make sure that I knew that she opposed the harmonized sales tax, the blended sales tax. She doesn't want anything to do with it. She still goes out and shops and she's still shrewd about how she spends her money. She certainly thinks that it's the wrong tax at the wrong time. I don't think that this particular constituent would have been able to be heard by this government, but certainly I'm happy to bring her questions forward.

After going to Garson, I went to Onaping Falls. Onaping Falls and Levack are on the north edge of my riding, on the way toward Timmins and Gogama. There are many, many mines located there in Levack. Vale Inco, FNX and Xstrata Nickel all have mines in that area. As most of the people in this House would know, FNX has shut down, which means that there is no more mining going on, and a lot of the people in those communities have been laid off. These are tough times for people in Onaping Falls and Levack.

They came and saw me and wanted to talk about access to mental health services, because it doesn't take long, after the bad news settles in and you lose your job and money problems start, that people need access to services. Access to mental health services for the people of Onaping and Levack is very hard to come by. They were looking to the government to see if there was something in there to help them, but it certainly was not there.

They also wanted to talk to me about this blended sales tax. The people who have lost their jobs, the people who live in Onaping Falls and Levack, don't want this harmonized sales tax. They don't want anything to do with it.

A lot of them have lots of time now that they're unemployed and would have liked to be heard by this government and would have liked to explain how personally this is going to affect them. But, as I said when I started, we are now debating a time allocation motion, which would mean that all of the good people in Onaping and Levack who would like their government to hear them, hear their complaints and hear how this blended sales tax is going to affect their day-to-day lives, won't have an opportunity to do this because a time allocation motion has been put forward by this government that will basically shut down debate and take away this opportunity for all of those good people to be heard.

1620

I then went on to Dowling. Dowling is not far away from Onaping Falls, Levack—for anybody who knows their Ontario geography—and talked with the people in my riding who live in Dowling. In Dowling, there were a lot of issues regarding access to crown land. A lot of bush roads in and around my riding have been closed. They're now off limits for the local people, and they have been reserved for big outfitters that basically fly the tourists in. People in my riding have been accessing crown land for a long time for recreational activities, whether hiking, blueberry picking, fishing or hunting etc. This is very much a way of life in my riding. Well, those

people were worried because, as I said, a lot of crown land in that part of my riding is now off limits. The roads have been closed, and the people can't access it.

They came and talked to me about the blended sales tax. Like the people in Onaping Falls and Garson and Skead and Gogama and Mattagami and Foleyet, they think that it's the wrong thing to do at the wrong time.

Dowling also depends on mining. A lot of residents of Dowling worked or used to work for FNX, which is operating a mine in Levack. Well, they won't have an income coming in pretty soon when their employment insurance runs out, but some of the expenses will still be there. They won't have the money to pay for it. Not only will they not have the money to pay for it, but there will be an 8% tax added to those expenses. They think that it's the wrong tax at the wrong time, and they would like their government to listen to them. But here again, they won't have an opportunity to be heard, because the government put forward a time allocation motion that will shut down debate on the budget so that the good people in Ontario don't have an opportunity to be heard.

From Dowling, I went to Chelmsford. Chelmsford is getting closer and closer to—it is actually a part of the city of Greater Sudbury. It's a thriving community of about 18,000 or 19,000 people. The people there wanted to come and talk to their MPP. They talked to me about child care. A lot of the people there wanted to have access to child care. They're on a list of close to 2,000 people who are waiting to access child care in and around Sudbury, including the people of Chelmsford. They are worried that there was no money allocated to child care in the budget and wanted to talk to the government to let them know how important it is for them to have access to child care.

Some of them are registered with the Second Career program. Some of them are trying to get back to school, because, here again, in Chelmsford, a lot of people have been affected by the forestry layoffs and more recently by the mining layoffs. But they won't have an opportunity to be heard.

They wanted to talk to me about the insecurity of the early childhood educator who, here again, would have liked to see a little bit of stability in their life through something in the budget that would have been pertinent to them, but there was nothing. Those good people won't have an opportunity to be heard in this Legislature. They won't have an opportunity to come to committee, because the government decided to put forward a time allocation motion which will limit debate.

From Chelmsford, I went to Azilda. Azilda is another little community, very much francophone. It's part of the city of Greater Sudbury, but it's a little bit north of the downtown core. Here again, it's a beautiful community. Azilda is built on the shore of Whitewater Lake, and it's a very thriving, very active community. Lots of people wanted to come and meet with their MPP, and what they had to talk to me about was access to long-term care. There's good news on the horizon because there will be a new long-term-care home built close to Azilda, but in the

meantime, Sudbury and the people who depend on the hospital in Sudbury are having a hard time. Our hospital has over 120 people occupying beds that we call alternate level of care, which are basically people who are in the hospital right now but would be better cared for if they could be in a long-term-care bed or if they could be receiving home care.

The people of Azilda wanted this better care for their loved ones. They know that the hospital is not the best place for them. Some of them came and talked to me about their loved one being with them in their homes but being in need of more home care; the limited hours of home care that they could receive were not enough to meet their needs. Those were tough decisions for those families, to decide not to keep their loved ones at home anymore because they couldn't cope. But then, when they turned around and finally made this heart-wrenching decision to place their loved one in a long-term-care bed, they were told of a waiting list that is basically so long that if you're not an emergency case, then your chances of getting a long-term-care bed in Sudbury are next to nil. You have to wait until a crisis happens, until you're admitted into the hospital etc. They don't want their loved one to have to go through this, but unfortunately, they won't have a chance to be heard. They won't have a chance to come and participate in the debate because the government decided to put this time allocation motion forward.

The people of Azilda oppose the blended sales tax. It is the wrong tax at the wrong time. Like everywhere else in Sudbury, a lot of people in Azilda make a living working for the mines or for the industry that supports the mines. They all have heard the bad news last week that not only did Xstrata Nickel lay off 700 people and Vale Inco lay off 300 people, but now Vale Inco has announced a three-month shutdown of production, which means that 4,000 people will be without a job. A lot of those residents, a lot of those people affected, those workers who live in my riding, they see the blended sales tax, the harmonized sales tax, as something very hurtful, the wrong tax at the wrong time. They would like—

Mr. Jim Wilson: The hateful tax?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The hateful sales tax? Yes, maybe that's what the H stands for, "hateful." No, they didn't say this. They just said that it was a hateful tax, the wrong time to introduce this kind of hardship on people who are already having a tough time.

The next place I wanted to talk to you about is Estaire. Estaire is a little community that is in the south part of my riding coming out of Sudbury. You go down the infamous Highway 69 and you make it to Estaire.

In Estaire, the problem has been and continues to be access to a landfill site. When the government decided to do cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Minister of Natural Resources looked at his business and said that they were not in the landfill site business. Sounds good for that ministry to say this, but it doesn't seem that good for the people of Estaire, who had been relying on the landfill site of the MNR for as long as the community has been there. So the landfill site is now shut down. No

solution is in place as of yet, although we are working really, really hard on it, which means that right now those people have nowhere to bring their garbage. If you don't belong to the city of Greater Sudbury, you cannot use the landfill site in Sudbury, and if you don't belong to the municipality of French River, you cannot bring your garbage to that landfill site either. Those are the only two places where landfill sites are available, so those people are caught in the middle with garbage piling up in their backyards.

1630

I'm happy to say that I've seen my first bear. They are out in full force in northern Ontario right now. They are very skinny. They look like big dogs with fur coats on their backs because all of their fat has melted away and they're hungry. People in Estaire are really worried. They have no place to put their garbage but they have those bears that are waking up all over the place, looking for food. This is not a good combination. The hungry bears will be able to smell garbage. It doesn't matter if you put it in the shed; they'll go right through the window if they need to. They have sometimes come into the basements of people's homes, and the people of Estaire are worried about it. They looked at the budget, like everybody else, and saw that the Ministry of Natural Resources budget was basically flatlined, so they didn't see hope for them in there.

They oppose the blended sales tax. People in Estaire live in an unorganized area. Lots of them have precarious employment, and they are worried about an opportunity to be heard by their government and let them know what they thought about the harmonized or blended sales tax.

I realize that the time on the clock is running, and I wanted to leave a little bit of time for some of my colleagues, so those will be my remarks.

J'aimerais, avant de me taire, mentionner que la motion de limitation de la durée des débats qui a été mise de l'avant par le gouvernement est un affront aux gens de l'Ontario qui veulent être entendus par leur gouvernement. La nouvelle taxe de 8 % qui a été mise de l'avant par le gouvernement est quelque chose—je me suis promenée partout dans mon comté la semaine dernière, et partout où je suis allée, qu'on parle de Foleyet ou Mattagami, de Gogama, de Skead, de Garson, Onaping Falls, Dowling, Chelmsford, Azilda, les gens me parlaient de la nouvelle taxe. Ils n'en veulent pas, de cette taxe de 8 %, et ils pensent que c'est un mauvais moment pour introduire une nouvelle taxe. Ils auraient aimé être entendus. Ils auraient aimé que leur gouvernement prenne le temps de les entendre pour bien comprendre l'effet que cette nouvelle taxe va avoir sur leur vie à eux dans leurs circonstances à eux. Mais avec la motion de limitation de la durée des débats, ces gens-là n'auront pas une chance d'être entendus, et cela va à l'encontre de la démocratie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate today.

You've heard from the opposite side of the House and you've heard quite a tale from over that side of the House, but let's just, for the record, set it straight today. I can tell you this: We did not have our budget at Magna. No, we didn't, not like the members from across the way. They forget that.

Now we see that there's an amendment on the table. What does that amendment say? "Why doesn't the finance committee travel throughout Ontario?" That's a really good idea. Do you know that in fact that has already happened? Do you know that the members from finance gave up a good part of their time to go to their constituencies just before Christmas? Those hard-working members went out there from community to community to hear the concerns of the people. They came back. They reported to the minister. That wasn't enough for the Minister of Finance. No, sir. He went out and he consulted with all the communities so he could hear the concerns. What we heard was, "It is time to transform." He understood that the day for business as usual is over.

We heard from the members from across the way, "You can't do it now; now's not a good time." I don't know when a good time is. But we heard the member from Nickel Belt. She gave us the opportunity to hear about a lot of her communities. The stories that she told—it hurts all of our members when we hear stories like that. But we understand from this side of the House that it's time we brought forward tax policy that reflects that we need to move Ontario forward with a very strong foundation. That's what this budget represents to me.

The Minister of Finance, the finance committee and also, as the member for Huron-Bruce, what I have done—I do this every year. My constituents can go on my website. They can provide information about what they would like to see in the budget. And they do that. Every year, they have the opportunity to do that. The people of Ontario have had their opportunity. What they told me was that it was time to make further investments. They understood that we needed to provide the stimulus. So we came forward with a package of \$32 billion. That represents jobs.

I say to the members from across the way, I find it absolutely fascinating to stand in this House to hear, when they talk about the health premium, "We're going to eliminate that"—a \$3-billion cut to health care, a \$3-billion cut.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It has been well known that that is inaccurate, and I would ask that the member withdraw that. There was never any intention—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That is not a point of order, but I appreciate the information. I return to the member for Huron-Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we think about the health care that is needed in all of our communities, investments are required in order to ensure that it remain strong. We understand that. I know that the members from across the way also understand that because I've heard them ask questions about

when they're going to get this or when they're going to get that. So I know that they do. But I think they say one thing and do the opposite.

One of the opportunities that I have in my riding is agriculture. As you know, we are the breadbasket of Ontario when it comes to agriculture. My farmers ask, "What will the single tax do to me as a farmer?" I know that from across the way we're going to hear a different story than what Ontario Farmer has to say. And what does Ontario Farmer have to say about the single sales tax? I must say that I do have a comment. I don't think they're going to like this across the way, so get ready, because I think they're going to stand up. I want to speak to this specifically because I know there have been a number of press releases sent out by members from across the way.

This is John Parsons from Ontario Farmer. These are his comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Big John?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Yes. He says: "From a disingenuous press release:" The member for Oxford suggests that the "Minister of Agriculture is still trying to confirm the treatment of farm equipment. According to the release, 'there is a point of sale provincial retail exemption for farm equipment, farm tools and farm machinery that are to be used by a person engaged in the business of farming, as well as building supplies and materials used to build, repair or modernize structures exclusively for farm purposes. Farmers show their card'...."

So it was disingenuous that that wouldn't go forward. It's laid out in Ontario Farmer. The headline—and I know that we're not allowed to use props, but what does the headline say? "Farmers Aren't Losers Under HST."

I'll tell you, I had the opportunity to speak with one of my counties on Saturday for over four hours and we had the opportunity to talk about the single tax and what it means for the farming community. There were a number of questions about buying cars and if they pay tax on them. We all know the answer to that. They don't.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Exempt.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Exempt. And then there is a list.

So I say, when we go forward with the single tax, which is what we're debating today, there will be an understanding by the people as more information gets out. But I want to assure the people from my riding and the people who are listening today that 93% of the people will not be affected by moving towards the single tax. The federal government made an investment of \$4.3 billion in the province of Ontario. Those dollars were used to ensure that the people of Ontario would not be adversely affected by going forward and transforming our taxation system, which will allow for investments in our business community as well.

1640

One of the things that has always been a number-one ask from our business community is a harmonization of tax. We have come forward at this time because we know it's important to have a strong foundation when the

economy begins to turn around, so that Ontario will be able to grow, and grow at the rate that we expect of such a proud province.

I welcome the opportunity to enter the debate. I wouldn't be the member from Huron-Bruce if I didn't talk about the investment in infrastructure in this fiscal year in the riding of Huron-Bruce. That number was just over \$18 million from the last announcement, but this fiscal year, the past fiscal year alone, the Ontario portion for investment in infrastructure in the riding of Huron-Bruce is \$57 million.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Had I known this week when the member from Niagara Falls invited me to the Shaw Festival that Carol Mitchell, the member from Huron-Bruce, was actually going to be positioning herself to be the star performer there, I would have signed up for tickets, because that was quite a performance. That was quite a performance.

Let me tell you something. If she thinks talking about a budget that was deliberated on six years ago is relevant today, she's wrong, because since then Ontario has lost its economic standing in this nation—in this nation. We used to be the best economic performers in the country; we are not any more, sadly. We used to be the economic engine of the country. Do you want me to tell you how? Because 10 years ago this kid here came to this province to find a life—

Mr. David Zimmer: From where?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —from Nova Scotia, if my colleague opposite needs to know, a have-not province that also brought in something called the HST—because in Nova Scotia, when students graduate university, there aren't any jobs there. They used to come to Ontario because it was the land of opportunity, where they could create a life, so that they could have their own home, so that they could raise their own family, so that they could pay the bills.

I've watched this province go through a steady decline since Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals have taken office. We have seen them increase the deficit at unprecedented rates because public spending has become out of control. We've watched them double the debt. We have seen, in the short period of time that they've been elected, two of the most massive tax hikes this province has ever seen, including the health premium, which is actually a tax, and presently the HST.

I had a 20-minute speech that I wanted to deliver on the budget, on the impacts it would have on the constituents I represent, on the concerns they have been sharing with me since they learned that their taxes were going to be increased, since they learned that since their neighbour has lost a job, it's going to be that much more difficult for them to raise their families, pay the bills and do what they like to do on the weekend.

There are restaurants in my riding, like the Cock'n Bull over in Bells Corners, that have recession-buster menu items—sales. They're all doing these things be-

cause—and it's all restaurants. I want to ask the Liberals, have you seen your companies going out of business? Have you not had people in your communities—and I admit, Ottawa is more insulated from this recession than other places, but that hasn't stopped people from calling, asking me about tax amnesties for their severances. It hasn't stopped the Nortel employees from calling me, telling me they don't know what they're going to do. It hasn't stopped the people on ODSP who are saying, "I can't afford 8% more."

And you're over there, the Liberals, looking at us, talking about a Magna budget. Who cares? You know who cares? You do, and your people over there, your spin doctors, who are writing your speaking points and telling you what to say. Get a backbone.

There are people losing their jobs. Since you've taken office, over 300,000 people have lost their jobs. That's 300,000 moms and dads, 300,000 breadwinners, 300,000 people who are trying to pay a mortgage or send their kids to school or put food on the table. All you can talk about is the past? Get with the program. And the fact that you are rushing this through, through time allocation—you should be ashamed of yourselves.

These are unprecedented times. When you look at the United States, and you look at the era of hope that they had actually hoped that they would usher in, with Barack Obama talking to the folks on the other side of the aisle—when we look at what's happening in our federal Parliament, and what we went through as a nation when we were gripped with whether there was going to be a coalition or not—this is not the time to subvert democracy.

There are rules in this place that were established to prevent the tyranny of the majority from running roughshod over the minority. We have seen, in recent times, many of our colleagues in press gallery either leaving on reassignment or losing their jobs. This is not the time to subvert democracy and hide the province's finances from the very people that we have been sent here to represent.

I'm really ashamed of the Liberals right now. I know that, in this place, what we can do from time to time is talk about how we don't like your policies, and we can offer criticisms. But at this particular time—I really want you to see this, guys—I'm very disappointed, because there are people in my constituency who deserve better. There are people in all of your constituencies who deserve better.

You're getting the same e-mails that we are on the HST, on the Second Career strategy. You're getting the same e-mails that I am on your new tax and power grab that Minister Smitherman is bringing in. You're getting the same e-mails that I am. And it's a shame, because you're sticking the very people that we're sent here to protect with tax increases, with less friendly business environments to create jobs, and you're just sitting there, doing nothing about it.

You know what? You'll stand up here and you're going to tell us, I'm sure, with seven more speakers, how time allocation is a great thing. I just want to congratulate you for that, if you think so.

I think that today—in fact, I think it was yesterday—when you brought this time allocation in, will be the day that we all remember years from now as the one when this Liberal government let this province slip away, and when the Liberal Party will remember that they let their own government slip away.

I will mark those words in three years, when we come back into this chamber. You will be defeated. The province will not stand for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate today, if only to remind members of the McGuinty Liberal government about some of the things they used to talk about. Some of us actually do have memories of the promises made, although I suggest that the Liberals want to forget them all.

I remember when the Premier used to wax eloquent, talking about democracy and transparency and talking about wanting everything to be open to the people of Ontario. I want people to know: What the McGuinty Liberals are up to here today is they want to avoid democracy. They want to shut down democracy. They want to shut down debate on their own budget.

It is the antithesis of democracy that the McGuinty Liberals want to practise today. It is a government that doesn't want the people of Ontario to know what is in this budget. It's a government that is afraid to go out and face the people of Ontario and hold public hearings across this province on its budget. And do you know why? I think people at home deserve to know why.

1650

First of all—and forgive me, Speaker, if you've heard this rhetoric before—if you look at this budget, what is happening on the one side is that the McGuinty Liberals are going to cut corporate taxes, when you add it all up, to the tune of over \$3 billion. At the same time, people who've lost their jobs, people who are in danger of losing their pensions, people who have less income than ever before are going to be hit with a sales tax that is going to hit them over and over and over again on a daily basis, for many things that are essential for daily life. So here it is: Corporations, banks, insurance companies and oil companies that don't need a tax cut are going to get a very substantial tax cut from the McGuinty government. Meanwhile, people who are struggling just to pay the hydro bill now, people who are struggling to pay the heating bill, people who don't know if they're going to be able to hang onto their very homes are going to be hit with yet another tax.

We've seen this before. I remember Ronald Reagan, who said, "Cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes and we'll lead the United States to the promised land." Well, it didn't lead the United States to the promised land. Then there was George Bush, who has said over and over again for the last eight years, "Cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes," and it would lead the United States to the promised land.

I say to members of the McGuinty Liberals: Go down to the United States and ask Americans if they feel like they're in the promised land today after all those corporate tax cuts.

But it's even closer to home. I remember when McGuinty Liberals used to castigate the very ground that Mike Harris walked upon, when Liberals used to say that when Mike Harris talked about cutting corporate taxes, cutting corporate taxes, cutting corporate taxes, this was going to lead Ontario into an economic disaster. Yet what do we see today? We see the McGuinty Liberals adopting Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Mike Harris right up to the eye levels. Mike Harris is rolling over laughing at the McGuinty Liberals because they have adopted his agenda hook, line and sinker.

But you know what? At least Mike Harris was honest about what he was doing. He would come right out and say it. The McGuinty Liberals want to pretend that somehow low-income people, modest-income people, middle-income people are going to get a tax cut out of this. Not a shred of truth to that, no matter how hard they try to announce it, no matter how hard they try to spin it, no matter how much they reannounce it. The fact of the matter is, this is a huge tax reduction for corporations, banks, insurance companies and oil companies that don't need it at the expense of ordinary people, many of whom still have a job but many of whom don't have a job anymore. This is a huge tax transfer, but this government doesn't even have the honesty to admit that, so therefore they're going to impose closure, ram it through the House and hope that unsuspecting Ontarians don't notice what's happening. Well, a little bit of social and economic history from Ontario: It didn't work for Mike Harris and it ain't gonna work for you, either. This is going to come back to bite you and bite you and bite you, time and time again.

I talked about how at least Mike Harris was honest. This outfit is going to try to mail out cheques just before this tax transfer going after the lowest- and modest-income people happens, and then they're going to mail out another cheque, hoping to cover it up. I don't know if you've ever had this happen, but you know these door-to-door electricity marketers who come around? The people who lie to you all the time but say, "If you'll sign this contract, I'll give you a \$50 cheque," and people sadly get sucked in by this. They sign the contract, they get the \$50 cheque and then they find out their hydro bill has tripled. Well, those door-to-door electricity marketers have nothing on the McGuinty Liberals. The McGuinty Liberals are going to send out three cheques to try to fool people, but at the end of the day, lower-income people, modest-income people, middle-income families, who are going to have less money, are going to end up paying more taxes under the McGuinty government.

I don't know, maybe the McGuinty Liberals have been hiding in their offices at Queen's Park. Maybe they don't know what's happening out there. But I can tell you what's happening. People can't even pay their hydro bills now, never mind add 8%. Many people can't pay their

heating bills now, never mind 8%. Many people are having a hard time paying at the pumps when they gas up their vehicle to go to work, never mind another 8%. A lot of people who just want to go have a cup of coffee and a muffin, to meet with their friends, to commiserate, can't afford the further 8%.

But you know who can afford it? I read what the banks are saying. They're saying, "Hey, it's been a tough year. We didn't rack up \$2 billion in profits this year. We only racked up \$1 billion." The corporate executives are saying, "Oh, gee, I didn't get my \$5-million bonus this year. I only got a \$3-million bonus." Gee, the head of Torstar just lost his job, and what did I see? He's going to get a \$4-million, \$5-million golden handshake? Under this government, these corporations, these characters, will be paying less taxes, but ordinary folks, many of whom are struggling right now, struggling to pay the hydro bill, struggling to pay the heating bill, struggling to put food on the table for their families—the McGuinty government is going to go after them with a vengeance, and they will pay every day. They will pay on the hydro bill. They will pay on the heating bill. They'll pay when they have to go to the gas pumps. They'll pay when they even want that cup of coffee. They'll pay when they take their kids to child care—over and over and over again.

I thought it was quite revealing: A former Minister of Finance, referring to 25 years ago when he looked at this kind of expansion of a sales tax, said that he turned away from it because it would be the most regressive and unfair expansion of taxation at the expense of low-, modest- and middle-income families ever. So he turned away from it. The McGuinty Liberals have endorsed it. Not only have they endorsed it, but they're going to use every trick they can, including mailing out some cheques to try to fool people; using closure here today to shut down debate, to confuse and hide from people what's really happening.

I have to tell you, it's not going to work, because we all know what's happening in Ontario. The layoffs have just started. There are going to be more layoffs in the auto sector. Because this government doesn't have a strategy for the forest sector, there are going to be more layoffs in the forest sector. There are going to be more layoffs in the steel sector. There are going to be more layoffs generally in the manufacturing sector. This is going to ripple and ripple through the economy. Economists are already saying that this is going to be even tougher a year from now. So at the very moment that you want to impose this unfair, regressive tax on low-, modest- and middle-income people, people will be facing more difficult circumstances than ever.

I'd merely say this: What's really wrong is that you're prepared today to trample on democracy to hide your tracks. You're prepared to deny democracy to hide your tracks. You're prepared to shut down democratic debate, which is what this Legislature is supposed to be about, in order to hide your tracks. You want to run and hide from the very people that you're going to tax and impose economic hardship on, and for that, you should all be

ashamed of yourselves, grossly ashamed of yourselves. If you're going to do this, you should at least face the people. You should at least have the courage to go out there and hold public hearings. If you think this is the right thing to do, then you should have the courage to say it to people. You should have the courage to say to a mother who is already struggling to pay for child care that she can afford to pay 8% more for child care. And to those pensioners who are trying to pay the heating bill and the hydro bill and maybe put gasoline in their cars, you should say that you believe that adding 8% to everything they have to do is fair and just in your minds. But you're not prepared to do that.

1700

I will make a prediction. Each and every one of you is going to regret this day and regret what you're doing here more than anything else the McGuinty Liberals have done. Not only is this the wrong thing to do—not only is it wrong to give corporate tax cuts to corporations who don't need them, not only is it wrong to then go after low-, modest- and middle-income families—but this is absolutely the wrong time to do it. Everyone knows that in a recession the private sector cuts back; private individuals cut back. They're afraid of losing their jobs, they're afraid of losing their pensions, they're afraid they might not be able to pay their mortgage, so they start cutting back. This is absolutely the wrong time to go after ordinary folks with a tax increase.

You know, I can't help but contrast what the Premier was saying only a few months ago. When hit with news of the recession, he said, "Everyone should go out and go shopping. That way you keep the economy moving." Tell me, how is it going to help people to keep the economy moving when you're going to hit them with another 8% tax, take 8% more out of their pockets every time they turn around? That is where you're caught. This is not going to help the economic recovery. This will make an economic recovery more difficult and more people will be hurt. This will come back to visit each and every one of you over and over again. You should be ashamed for imposing closure to try to hide from democracy and hide from the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to get a few words on the record this afternoon. I find it most interesting; I listened very carefully to the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I recall reading some of the columnists back in 1995, and it was always interesting to note that the Ontario Legislature virtually did not sit in 1995, which is really interesting. I just got a lecture about closure, about transparency, about the democratic process, and you know, every commentator would say that from 1990 to 1995, the member from Kenora–Rainy River was the number two man in that government. With every key issue, they went to the number two man in that government to give his stamp of approval. I'm sorry he didn't stay around to hear about his role as the number two man in that government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough I think knows full well that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of another member.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was just so—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I hope the same courtesy would be extended to him if he's absent. So I'll return to the member from Peterborough, having reminded him.

Mr. Jeff Leal: People talk about trying to rewrite history, and it always disturbs me when that attempt is made.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Talk about how he wanted to kill the subway.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, I could get on that. It was interesting too.

There's a letter floating around. I happen to have a copy of it. There was a suggestion by the third party that we actually raise the PST. That's kind of interesting too, because they railed against the whole notion of the concept of a consumption tax, but at that particular time—that was then, this is now—they were in favour of an increase in the PST. I also remember the great debate about the social contract, where every collective agreement in the public sector in the province of Ontario was ripped up, ripped to shreds. Were there any public hearings on the social contract? The answer is zero, none, nada, no public hearings on the social contract. I remember I was a city councillor in Peterborough at that time, and I talked to my friends in CUPE, which represented both the office workers and the public works workers at the city of Peterborough. They were most concerned that their contract was ripped to shreds. They wanted to have the opportunity to have public hearings in Peterborough so they could provide input to the government of the day—the number two man of the government of day—on why the social contract was wrong. But they never got that opportunity.

Now I want to fast-forward to 1997-98. I remember very well going to Ottawa for that famous AMO convention. There may be some members in this Legislature now who were at that famous meeting. Were you there, the member from Huron-Bruce?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I was there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Member from Sault Ste. Marie, were you at AMO?

Mr. David Oraziotti: I was there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Sure. A lot of them were there.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I was there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Scarborough—Rouge River was there. That was a wonderful meeting. That was the meeting where we got the details of the Who Does What committee, that famous exercise. I always call it the “who got done in” committee. That was the greatest tax transfer to municipalities of the province of Ontario, and then ultimately to the property taxpayer of the province of Ontario. Were there public hearings on that little exercise?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I don't think so.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No—no public hearings at all. Holy smoke, no public hearings on the “who got done in” committee, which was an absolute travesty, because I recall there were many municipal politicians who would have gone to London for hearings, who would have gone to Wawa for hearings, who would have gone to Cobalt for hearings, who would have gone to Pembroke for hearings, who would have gone to Arnprior for hearings. But they never got that opportunity, because democracy wasn't in play at that particular time—no, no, no.

Last week was a wonderful week in the great constituency of Peterborough. I got a chance to talk to a lot of people. One of the questions I get asked is, “Why is the official opposition and why is the third party going to vote against accelerating the Ontario child benefit for those families that need it?” To fully implement that benefit in July of this year is going to be very, very important. I listened to the member from Nickel Belt. I've been to Garson, Ontario. I've got some friends in Garson, Ontario, and I can tell you that there are families in Garson, Ontario, that want the fully implemented Ontario child credit on July 1 of this year. I know they want it, they're looking forward to it, and they will put those dollars to great use.

I was also talking to my good friends at GE. Peterborough is the home of their nuclear products division. About 500 people are there, members of the Canadian Auto Workers: \$35 an hour plus benefits. They want to know why the third party won't support them to protect their jobs in the expansion of Darlington. They're asking that question, but they're also looking at provisions in this budget which lower GE's corporate tax, lower Quaker corporate tax to retain those export jobs that are so important in my riding of Peterborough.

I want to get on to this little one right here. It was Mr. Wilson who put forward this amendment. I look at all these tours: April 29 in Toronto, April 30 in Toronto, May 5—now that would be a good stop, because they're coming to Peterborough—May 6 in Belleville, May 7 to Cornwall, May 12 in Ottawa, May 13 in Guelph, May 14 in London, May 19 in Windsor, May 20 in beautiful Goderich, public hearings in North Bay. Well, I understand their leadership convention is towards the end of June, I believe. This, to me, looks like the leadership tour 2009. I can just imagine what members will be substituted on that committee as it's touring the province of Ontario. Now, I'm not a cynic, but I can tell you some of the names that will be on that committee as they go visit these wonderful and beautiful communities. I would guess that at some stage you'll see Mr. Hudak at one of those locations, and the next day you might see Mrs. Elliott at one of those locations, and the next day you might see Mr. Klees at one of those locations, and I know my good friend Mr. Hillier will be at at least four of those locations, because there's no question in my mind that he is the frontrunner over there and will be using taxpayers' dollars on committee to finance this leadership tour.

1710

I had a chance to participate in that recent by-election in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. What a wonderful

experience—the wonderful member Rick Johnson. Let's hear it for Rick coming in here.

What's really interesting, when I look at this House today—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: What's Laurie doing now?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Laurie? Oh, she's doing a wonderful job in the Leader of the Opposition's office.

Wonderful parents. I knew her late father, Bill, very, very well. Her mother is still living in Kinmount, Ontario. They used to operate the grocery store, where I used to drop in every once in a while, in Kinmount—a wonderful family.

But let me tell you, I look across the aisle today—I didn't see too many of those members pounding on doors where I was in Apsley and Pontypool and all those great communities that make up that riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Rick Johnson took the message to the people.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I didn't see that member at all on Main Street, Lindsay, when I was there, and I was there fairly frequently, because—well, I won't suggest any motives why they weren't there.

What I want to know is why, in a number of days, the opposition and third party will not be supporting \$4 billion in cash payments to 6.5 million Ontario families and individuals, why they won't support a new, permanent \$260 refundable sales tax credit for low- and middle-income adults and children, why they won't be here to support an enhanced refundable property tax credit to continue providing relief to low- and middle-income homeowners and tenants, and why they won't be here to support \$1.1 billion in personal income tax reductions.

I can tell that the research is very poor by the parties opposite because they haven't taken the time to look at this comprehensive budget. They're against spending \$32 billion on infrastructure renewal in Ontario. Every mayor, every reeve and every councillor I get a chance to chat with wants this money invested.

In fact, I want to get on the record that my good friend the federal member of Parliament for the riding of Peterborough, Mr. Del Mastro, sent out a press release about the Ontario budget, and what did he say? "This is a courageous budget that the Ontario government is bringing forward"—a "courageous budget." That's what Mr. Del Mastro said. He and I get along very well.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's right. We're looking at bringing that train to Peterborough together. We're starting with a GO bus this fall.

You have to look at the number of really progressive things that we're doing in this budget.

I had a chance to talk to a couple of seniors' groups last week, and they asked questions of me about the SST. They said, "We're hearing all about this SST." I said, "Just wait for a moment. Do you understand about the Ontario property tax credit that we're going to be providing?" "No; we haven't really heard about that part of the budget."

When you take the time to explain to our hard-working seniors in this province, the people who have built this province and who have built this democracy, and they're only hearing one side of the story, you take 10 or 15 minutes and sit down with this wonderful document, the Ontario budget, and explain to them how the permanent property tax credits are going to work to offset some of the downloading that was imposed on them in 1997-98, that under the direction of Minister Duncan and Minister Watson finally we're lifting that overwhelming burden that has been on municipalities since 1998 and we finally have a framework in place that is going to lift that, take those responsibilities away from municipalities and bring them back to the province where they belong and provide substantive relief to property taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

I'd be remiss if I didn't say that it was pretty upsetting in this past hockey season that the Peterborough Petes didn't make the playoffs, but we're certainly looking forward to next season. Jeff Twohey, the general manager, will make some changes and make the team a little more competitive.

But I shouldn't get sidetracked from the budget. This is a comprehensive document, a kind of document that will put Ontario in a good position to start to grow as we move forward under the challenging economic circumstances we find ourselves in today.

It's interesting that the member from Whitby-Oshawa, a person I really like, who's running for the leadership of the official opposition, indicated in her opening statement that this isn't a recession that was brought about by the government of Ontario; that, indeed, this is a worldwide challenge we face. I think she was honest enough to recognize the particular economic challenges that we're facing.

It's fair to say that there will be a debate in this place about which policy directions we need to take and options we need to choose as we want to move forward and enhance growth. But I happen to think that this Ontario budget provides the foundation, on a go-forward basis, on how we can improve on Ontario's economy. I know that my businesses in Peterborough—GE, Quaker, Siemens, all the big companies—are really applauding us because we're going to take away some of those PST input costs that they were facing along the manufacturing process, to make their products more competitive, particularly in the export market that we need to develop to increase job opportunities here in Ontario.

I think I'm winding down here; I've got a few seconds left. I just wanted to give my thoughts on the bill today. This budget will put us in good shape.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on the motion this afternoon.

I am quite amazed—I'm going to go back to the member for Huron-Bruce—that she brought up ancient history, as if that is relevant to the people of Ontario today, those who are losing their jobs in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Then the member from Peterborough spoke at length and wanted to talk all about history and wanted to talk about the past. He didn't want to talk about today, and he didn't want to talk about the blended sales tax, because he's having some real problems in his own riding over that issue. He didn't want to talk about that, because he is one of those members of caucus who got blindsided.

While they were talking, and the Minister of Finance and the Premier are saying, "No, no, we're not really thinking about anything like that," the Minister of Finance is in Ottawa signing the papers on the blended sales tax, while the Liberal caucus was kept completely in the dark. The leadership of the party didn't even want their own members to know, because they were afraid of what the reaction would be. The reaction would have been, quite frankly, similar to what we're hearing across the province.

I'm going to get back to that blended McGuinty sales tax in a minute.

It's amazing how the Liberals can say one thing and then do a 180-degree turn, and somehow they get away with it. I don't know if it's because they have the complicity of the media or what.

I've got to give the member for Kenora-Rainy River a lot of credit, the former leader of the third party, and I certainly thank him for the contributions he's made to this Legislature over the years.

These guys over on the other side went on ad infinitum about how damaging tax cuts would be to Ontario's economy, because, you see, it didn't fit into their agenda of raising taxes. Dalton McGuinty came into power in 2003, promising that he would not raise taxes, and then he proceeded with the biggest tax grab in Ontario's history. So they kept going on continuously that tax cuts were bad, they were dangerous; in fact, they would inflict serious harm on Ontario's economy and send it into the tank.

We've been consistent. Our message has always been that if you leave more money in the hands of those who create wealth and employment in this province, that is exactly what will happen. They believe that only the government could deal with the issue of job creation and wealth creation. Well, they've been proven to be totally wrong, and now they've come around to our way of thinking.

But do they give us any credit for browbeating them over the course of almost six years in this House about how wrong they were? No. They chastise us for criticizing their budget, not because we're opposed to the tax cuts. In fact, you did that only because we pushed you.

1720
What we're against is when the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance stand up and say, "In our budget, 93% of Ontarians will have a tax reduction." I don't have the data, but I know, based on their record, that you can't believe it. But the one thing you can believe, and it is absolutely true, it is absolutely irrefutable, is that 100% of Ontarians will pay more tax under your Dalton McGuinty sales tax—100%. That's an absolute guarantee.

When I talk to people in my riding, they just shudder. They're almost begging, "Is there anything you can do to stop this?" I have said to them, "We are going to do everything we can between now and July 1, 2010, to get as much of this out and changed, because this government is not listening to the people." However, I have to also tell them that unless something completely historic and unprecedented goes on, these folks will still be the government in July 2010 and they will implement it and they will do as they wish because they have the majority and they don't care what it does to you.

Seniors are absolutely terrified of the effects that the McGuinty sales tax is going to have on them. If you live in your home and you heat with oil, natural gas or electricity, you can't turn off the heat. You can't be without the power. Do you know what? You can call up the cable company and you can say, "We can't afford the cable," but you can't be without those essentials, and in McGuinty's Ontario, you will be paying 8% more for every one of those absolutely necessary things. That is wrong when you're in an economy that has bled 300,000 jobs under your leadership and is expected to bleed more. What do you say to people who are losing their homes and in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario they'll pay 8% more for almost everything they consume?

Mr. Robert Bailey: And the government thinks it's okay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And the government thinks it's okay. And yes, they talk about how some businesses are going to like it because there's an input tax credit and all of this kind of convoluted stuff that the average person on the street is not going to see. Is there an input tax credit for Ontario Hydro or the gas company or the gas you put in your trucks? I come from rural Ontario, as many of you people do, and 8% more is going to go into every tankful of gas that you absolutely need to get around in rural Ontario. You can't hop on the subway. The subway doesn't come by my door or anybody else's door in my riding, or most ridings in this province. They have to get into a vehicle of some kind and they have to burn gasoline, and that's going to be costing 8% more in McGuinty's Ontario.

Shamefully, if tragically or through natural causes or whatever you have to have a funeral in your family, you're going to pay 8% more for that funeral. Dalton McGuinty is going to get 8% out of you even if he has to take it out of the pockets of the last suit you ever put on. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, nothing is sacred.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Say it ain't so.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That is absolutely right.

I haven't even got to the—I'm going to run out of time, my whip is telling me. I just want to read an e-mail from one of my local constituents. I'll have to put on my glasses here.

"Dear Mr. McGuinty:

"Please don't harmonize the PST with the GST. We cannot afford it! We are already stretched further than we can manage. I don't know how much more the Ontario taxpayer can bear. We have nothing left after all our bills

are paid. We don't live the 'high life.' After years of raising a handicapped child on a single income, it's really quite impossible to believe that now, taxes are going to be a whole lot higher. The \$1,000 bribe won't do much to help either.

"Please reconsider. It's tough out here in the real world."

I'm going to encourage each and every member of the Liberal caucus over there to get out to the real world and find out what's going on, because the people can't afford this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziotti: It's a pleasure to speak to the motion this afternoon and have an opportunity to comment on the motion as well as the importance of this budget; probably the most important budget in the last six years, and it's time to get on with it. The opposition would like to sit here for days and days and days and debate stimulus funding, but we know that Ontarians are hurting and we need to move forward with this very important stimulus package. That's why we've taken a number of steps, and I know the opposition doesn't want to talk about that today. They don't want to talk about any of the contents of the budget and all of the benefits that are in the budget for Ontarians.

That's why we're also going to talk about what people are saying outside of the Ontario Legislature, because while members in this House will offer their opinions on it, I want to talk a little bit about what people are saying in the province of Ontario in the various communities, as well as what we're hearing in the media about the budget. It's obvious the opposition don't want to hear about that.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You're getting the same e-mails we are.

Mr. David Oraziotti: We're not getting the same e-mails.

First of all, I think Ontarians are a bit confused about the position of the opposition, because quite frankly, we've heard individuals in the opposition say they support a single sales tax and a move to that tax, and we've also heard members say that the stimulus funding is too high. So I'd like to know what the opposition plan is. We haven't heard anything. We've heard a lot of blustering about the budget right now, but we've heard nothing in terms of what their plan is, what their option is. Let's make that clear, first of all.

The NDP, we know, are going to vote against the budget as well, yet we'll hear members in the Legislature stand in this House and say, "Where's the funding for my project? Where's the funding for my community initiative?"—just as members in the Conservative Party will say. So while you don't support the budget and you don't support the stimulus initiatives, it will be another week or two before you're in the Legislature here talking about how important it is to get this stimulus funding out the door to your community for your project. I think it's fair that Ontarians understand the position of the opposition parties here in the Legislature, that they will

say time and time again that we are not spending enough money, and then on the other hand vote against the budget because it's too much spending or what have you.

We're not going to be passing anything like the social contract. This is not a Magna budget. We're doing the budget in the Ontario Legislature, just as we have done over the last number of years.

I want to talk a little bit about the benefits of the budget, because only the opposition party believes that the global recession began at Queen's Park. We know that it's our job during these challenging times to make the tough decisions to ensure that we protect important public services, to make decisions that support families and that also get our economy moving again. So let's spend a little bit of time talking about some of those things.

We're proposing to accelerate the Ontario child benefit from \$600 to \$1,100 annually. This means that an average family will see from \$50 to \$92 per month, an increase that the opposition is voting against. I'm very disappointed about that. We're also going to be investing \$1.9 billion in new money in our health care system and creating an additional 100 new medical school spaces, something that we're continuing to work toward. We have added a 23% increase in physician supply over the last number of years, something that both opposition parties had very, very poor records on.

And \$1.2 billion is being allocated to renovate 50,000 social housing units and build 4,500 new affordable housing units; \$5 million annually to ensure stable funding for municipal rent banks across Ontario that have, to date, prevented the eviction of about 15,000 people in the province of Ontario.

Let's talk a little bit about our seniors' property tax grant. The homeowners' property tax grant will be increased from \$250 to \$500. That's a \$1-billion increase over the next five years.

1730

As well, there will be \$900 million in increased funding to our education system, as well as increasing the social assistance rates by 2% and increasing the temporary assistance and assistance for children with severe disabilities, as well as those in long-term-care homes who receive an additional allowance. Since 2003, it has meant a 33% increase for a single parent with two children under the age of 18. That is a real difference and a real impact on Ontario families in this province, something that the opposition parties fail to recognize and fail to support.

As members know, in the House on March 31, we also increased the minimum wage to \$9.50. That's the sixth increase since 2003. In this sector of support, there are a variety of individuals in the public who have made very, very positive comments about it.

Pat Capponi, from the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, has said, "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians."

John Stapleton from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said, "This is a budget that favours low-

income people, and the working poor most of all because when you look at all the benefits, it is clear that the working poor and those with low wages are going to be better off as a result of the budget measures.”

Gail Nyberg from the Daily Bread Food Bank said that if you’re a low-income Ontarian, this is a positive budget. She said, “I congratulate the government on recognizing that you can fight poverty and stimulate the economic scene at the same time.”

This is something that the opposition parties fail to recognize. Again, I have yet to hear a plan on moving forward. They’re the only individuals who believe the global recession began here at Queen’s Park. But we have a plan: a plan to move forward for families, a plan to stimulate the economy, a plan to create investment in the province of Ontario.

Let’s talk about the infrastructure stimulus funding that I know the opposition members will be interested to hear about. They’ll be standing in the House, in the Legislature, asking where the funding is for this project and that project in their riding—“When is it coming? Why isn’t it coming soon enough?”—after they vote against the budget.

We’re going to be investing \$34 billion over the next two years to stimulate the economy—\$32.5 billion of that is in infrastructure spending; \$700 million for additional funding for skills training—and let’s be clear that only \$5 billion of that is from the federal government. This is going to create 300,000 jobs over the next two years to support Ontario families and improve their range of skills and trades. These investments in infrastructure provide jobs in the short term and help build the foundations for tomorrow in the province of Ontario.

We’re also going to be investing \$9 billion for transportation, including \$300 million for northern and rural infrastructure funding; \$7 billion, additionally, for health care; and \$2 billion to implement electronic patient records. The list is lengthy.

There’s \$4 billion for education, including \$780 million to modernize infrastructure at our colleges and our universities. We know that investing in the skills and training of the people of Ontario is a very good investment in uncertain economic times. That funding is being matched by the federal government. As well, we’re going to be investing \$90 million for the youth summer employment opportunities that will help to create 100,000 opportunities for young people in the province of Ontario.

There are many individuals in this sector of our economy who have made positive comments.

Paul Genest, president of the Council of Ontario Universities, said, “These investments in new construction and campus renewal will provide our students and faculty with many of the modern facilities needed for a high-quality learning experience and cutting-edge research.”

Jenn Howarth, president of the College Student Alliance, said, “Students applaud the provincial government for recognizing the needs and role of colleges in Ontario.”

The building trades council also provided very, very positive feedback.

When it comes to the green economy and innovation, we’re also making a \$390-million investment to develop initiatives to assist in the implementation of the proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act. We know that there are many jobs to be had in this sector as we move forward in the province of Ontario, and we would be remiss if we were not making investments in this sector—something, again, that I’ll remind members of the House that the opposition parties will be voting against. This is not the kind of proactive approach that Ontarians would like to see in getting our economy moving and supporting families.

If passed, this is going to create thousands of new jobs in the future. We’re also going to be investing \$250 million over the next five years for new, emerging technologies that will also assist in moving our economy forward.

Tax reform has been talked about by my colleagues. The investments that we’re making, the fact that 93% of Ontarians will see a reduction in their tax, the fact that \$500 million in costs to our businesses in Ontario will be eliminated, simply a drag on the economy, by moving to a single filing of tax for the business sector, is going to be a tremendous benefit.

In my community, people have been responding very positively. The Sault Area Hospital CEO was very positive; Dr. Ross, the president of Algoma University; our mayor made positive comments; the CAO made positive comments as well.

The headlines in our paper were positive. The Sault Star headline following the budget was “Liberal Budget Gets Top Marks.” The chamber of commerce put out an article that said, “Harmonized Sales Tax—We Love It!” Take a look at other headlines across the province. In the Ottawa Citizen there was a headline that said, “Kudos for a Budget We Needed.”

Folks, this is a positive step forward. We need to support the budget, and I would encourage members on all sides of the House to support the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have eight minutes because of the time allocation motion. Given that I don’t have the time to really explore this as fully as I would have liked, I’d like to begin with a bit of a guessing game.

I’ll ask members if they can identify the person I’m quoting. “Am I the only one here who wonders whether it’s all worth it, whether with this government and the way they go on, with their closure and time allocations, the role of this place is being diminished to such a great extent that backbenchers and opposition members must really ask themselves what their role is?” Who said that? The answer is the current Deputy Premier, on December 21, 1999, in opposition. That’s who. And if you—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: That was then and this is now.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That was then and this is now. That’s correct, and that part hasn’t changed. Don’t you

complain about time allocation motions and don't you complain about the role of the government backbenchers, all of that stuff, and then take government and enforce this on us. This is a disgrace.

I was here this morning in question period, as were the government members. I watched question period as a backbencher myself. I listened as everybody on this side—and I'm sure that in their minds, some of the backbenchers themselves wondered what had happened to democracy.

As I said earlier, in response to a member's debate from the other side, it's quite remarkable, the queue of e-mails and letters that come into an MPP's office when constituents aren't happy. I wonder if the government members, particularly in the backbench, actually believe that negative e-mails, complaining about the DST, come only to Conservatives and NDP members. It can't be possible. The problem is that they've all drunk the Kool-Aid—no hearings, no consultations, no time to debate.

We hear about the global recession: "The global recession caused all this." It's like, "The devil made me do it." The global recession caused it. You know, there is a global recession. It has affected all of us; there is no doubt of that. But if anybody cares to check Hansard for a period of years—and I'm talking about years, going back to 2003, when that government got hold of this province—this side was telling you what would happen, was warning of gathering storm clouds, but you weren't listening. You weren't listening then, you're not listening now and you won't be listening after the global recession is gone and this province, this wonderful Ontario that all 107 of us in this chamber enjoy, is being torn asunder by the actions of that government.

True to form, in the shadows of the Legislature, the McGuinty Liberals are trying to shut down debate and public hearings on this year's budget. Why won't you take this to the people? Why won't you ask people what they believe?

I don't for a moment buy the fact that backbench members had a say in this. I don't for a moment buy the fact that backbench members don't know what they're going to face in 2011 as a result of this.

1740

This is Act I. We are here debating this today. We must remember that this budget addresses a number of things, and one of the things it addresses is an 8% additional tax on Ontarians that doesn't come into effect in this budget year. It only comes into effect next year. So act one comes to a close because of the time allocation motion, and this will go away for a while. Trust me, we'll keep it alive, and then next year, when the merged sales tax, the blended sales tax, the BST, the DST, whatever you want to call it, comes into force and people are forced to pay that on their heating oil, on their Tim Hortons, on their funerals, on that long list of things that it doesn't apply to now, this will come back and haunt you—Act II.

The government is trying to hide the damaging effects of its own economic policies on Ontario families, on

Ontario businesses, on Ontario seniors most of all, 22,000 of whom are sitting on wait lists for an average of about 110 days. Take a stick and poke their eye out, why don't you? How much more can you hurt them?

This government is allowing five hours' debate on a \$108-billion budget, and that debate is the only discussion under the aegis of this Legislative Assembly that will be held at all—only here, only in this chamber, only now, only in Toronto.

Our party is calling for an amendment that would allow additional hearings in communities around this province so that Ontarians can voice their concerns about Dalton's latest tax grab and other economic issues. Why are you so afraid of that? I hear the hooting on the other side. What scares you so much? Don't you want to hear from real Ontarians? Thirteen million out there are hurting right now—hurting—without any help from you, and now you impose this on them.

Will Liberal MPPs be permitted to vote freely and stand up for their constituents? For all the noise that I'm hearing coming from the other side, I am sure there are some silent members here today and not here now who, when this comes for a vote, will question their consciences but will wind up going along with the government because they've been told to do so, even though they know that the hundreds of interventions coming into their offices from their constituents are saying, "Please help us." You know, backbenchers. You know because you have the same e-mails and you have the same letters that I do.

I went into the budget lock-up myself on March 26 because I thought it would bring back my old days, the days when I went into lock-ups and made my own notes as a reporter, read the material. It's very interesting, when you go into the lock-up, you can't leave, so you eat the lousy lunch and you come to your own conclusions. And you know what? I did not have to be an ex-reporter or an opposition MPP to see that we are in a great deal of trouble—not the kind that I knew we were in, but the new kind that this budget would be creating. The budget did not adequately address reality. The McGuinty government is in trouble. It reflects the fact that Ontario is in trouble. Every single person in this province is in trouble as a result of what you people are going to pass, and you're going to pass it without giving them a chance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to this motion.

I want to use my time to talk about the future. This budget is about building a strong future for the province of Ontario. This budget is about building a prosperous Ontario, an Ontario that is caring, that is compassionate and that is competitive. This budget is about making sure that when this global recession is over, Ontario is in front, that Ontario has the capacity—and when we're talking about Ontario, we're talking about people in Ontario. When we're talking about businesses in Ontario, we are really talking about people in Ontario. We are

talking about jobs for Ontarians. This budget is about making sure that we retain our global leadership; that we are a society, a community, which is envied by the world. That is why so many people want to choose Ontario as their home, and that's what this budget is trying to do. That is, I believe, what we all collectively want to do: to make sure that we create a strong Ontario, and that's why in this budget we have taken steps to make that happen.

That is why I support this budget. That is why I want to make sure that we pass this budget as soon as we can so we can start investing in our communities, so that we can start taking the \$32.5 billion assigned in this budget to create roads, bridges, community centres, hockey rinks, so that those monies flow to our communities and we can start building those real community hubs, so that we can start creating those jobs because people will be involved in building the infrastructure, these buildings.

In my community alone in Ottawa Centre, we want access to these funds to build a Chinatown gate at Somerset and Bronson. We need these funds to build a children's centre so that more families have access to quality child care. We need these funds to renovate the YMCA in my riding to ensure that families have a good place to go and get recreational services.

We need these funds to make sure that we can continue to invest in Carleton University in my riding of Ottawa Centre so that students continue to have a quality education. That is what this budget is about. That's what we need to invest in.

The \$1.2 billion that is being allocated in this budget for affordable housing is integral to my community in Ottawa Centre. When I'm out in my community, when I'm going to various buildings which are run by Ottawa Community Housing, when I'm talking to people who live in these buildings, one thing I get told again and again is that we need to invest more to increase the quality of these buildings. These are not the kinds of conditions people should be living in. I'm very proud that in this budget we are putting real dollars forward to make sure the elevators in those buildings are working, that the units in those buildings are good quality, that they're energy efficient. We are not only upgrading the existing affordable housing in Ottawa Centre; we're building new affordable housing for seniors and people with disabilities.

This is what this budget is about. That is why we need to pass this budget, so that communities like mine in Ottawa can get the necessary funding to help real people who need that affordable living, to ensure that children in working families can see the increase in their Ontario child benefit from \$600 to \$1,100. I have talked to many parents in my community, in my riding, and they are very excited that they will see this increase as of this summer if this budget passes. That is going to make a real difference because it gives them that extra money that is necessary to spend on their children. That's what parents live for, to make sure their kids have a better life, and we have an opportunity to help those parents. By passing this budget, that's exactly what we're doing, because our

future lies in our children. We are trying to make sure that our children have a prosperous and vibrant future in this great province of ours.

That is why I urge all members to come together to make sure that this budget is passed so that all of our communities can get the benefit they deserve and that we grow in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm of two minds speaking to this budget because it's unfortunate that we have to stand up and yet again talk about the insensitivity and disrespect that this government has for the people of Ontario.

Clearly, the McGuinty government has become worried—yes, worried—about the impact of this budget and what impact it may have on future successes. That's why this debate is being collapsed early, because we don't want to hear what the people of Ontario are saying. So if I sat on the McGuinty backbench, I would not be very pleased that my chance to represent my constituents was being taken away from me. Perhaps that's exactly why the Premier is doing this: so that they aren't forced to hear any dissenting opinions from their own ranks.

1750

Our Premier should be fairly accustomed to dealing with angry, disappointed taxpayers. Mr. McGuinty promised not to raise taxes, not one red cent more than when he took office, and he did that during the 2003 election campaign. As soon as he was installed as Premier, he levelled the single-largest tax increase in the province of Ontario, and he dared call it a health premium—a premium.

After levying that enormous tax and raking in the cash, you still went hat in hand to Ottawa and pleaded poverty. Where did that money go? Where did that \$12.2 billion you levied through the health tax go? Where is that money? I think that before you dig deeper into the pockets of overburdened taxpayers, before anybody gives you more money, they deserve to know how that money has been spent.

Inside your budget document is a telltale sign that all is not what it appears to be. The revenues you are expecting for 2009-10 are approximately \$96 billion—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt the member for Burlington, but I can hardly hear her. I would ask the government members in particular to please come to order and allow the member for Burlington to make her comments.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, they don't want to hear it because it isn't information they want to know.

That figure jumps from \$96 billion in 2009-10 to \$104 billion in 2011-12. Well, you do the math.

So, let's get this straight: The McGuinty government needs to levy yet another oppressive tax on the people of this province because they need the money, and yet, in tough economic times, when we are losing manufactur-

ing jobs to more businesses in friendly provinces in Canada, the McGuinty government is expecting to see a 7% growth in revenue the year that the Dalton sales tax comes into effect—astounding. So not only are Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Duncan, in their infinite wisdom, saddling future generations with this astronomical debt load, they are projecting to reap in big bucks in—guess what?—an election year. What a shocker.

The people of Ontario don't want you to try to bribe them with their own money—and that's what you're doing. They want to be able to afford to live in this province till 2011.

What this cash injection tells me is that the McGuinty government is expecting to generate far more revenue through the Dalton sales tax than they are willing to let on.

The McGuinty government's recent budget fails to provide Ontario families and communities with the assistance they need to get through this crisis.

Businesses need help to be competitive. Ontario isn't losing jobs to China and Mexico; we're losing jobs to companies in Saskatchewan. Western provinces are holding job fairs in downtown Toronto. That's where companies that used to surround the GTA have gone: to Saskatchewan. Our staff is being hired away. The business community cannot take another blow. They need real action and real support.

We cut taxes when our party was in power. We invested in infrastructure when our party was in power. We paid down the debt when our party was in power. We reduced regulations when our party was in power—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll ask the government members to come to order, please, so that I can hear the member for Burlington.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline:—and we let Ontarians keep more of their money. We had record employment figures. We were leading the G7 nations in GDP growth, and we were proud to be the economic engine of Canada.

What do we see now? We see that Mr. McGuinty has managed to reverse all of those successes and bring this province to its knees. In fact, you have brought us back to where Bob Rae left Ontario's coffers when we took over the—

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Liberal Premier—when we took over the reins of government.

We are spending \$1 million an hour more than we're taking in. Let me put that into a household perspective. Imagine if your business or your family budget spent even \$10 more an hour than you take in; that's \$240 more a day. That's \$87,360 more a year that you would owe above your income. None of us could afford that. This province can't afford that.

I would like to remind the Deputy Premier, Minister Smitherman, of his previous support for travelling committees, because this government has decided not to travel. We don't want to hear what the people have to

say. We just want to vote and keep moving. The minister said, "I remember a different day, and I'm a reasonably young man, when I worked for a different Premier, one who used public hearings and committee meetings, where travel meant something, where members travelled, where they went around the province and sought input, where amendments were brought forward."

That was democracy. What's happening in this House now is not democracy.

There is nothing in this budget for families or seniors, and they can't even speak to you about it.

You are getting the same e-mails that this side of the House is getting because they're truncated, and we know who they're going to. They're going to all of you also. So to say that you don't know what ordinary Ontarians are saying is not forthright.

They have to find daycare spaces because full-day kindergarten is not in the budget as promised. That's yet another promise that's been broken. Families now have to find daycare spaces that have been given away because they have been planning on full-day kindergarten.

There is no consistency with this government. There never has been and there never will be.

No doubt members opposite are not interested in hearing from working families because then, perhaps, you may have to vote against the government budget. Perhaps that's why you're not having the hearings. That's why you don't want to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The time allocated for debate on this motion has now expired.

We will first deal with the amendment to the motion that was moved by Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson moved that the motion moved by the government House leader on April 21, 2009, be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph, by adding, "The bill shall be debated for a further eight hours, after which" after the phrase, "when the bill is next called as a government order;" and

By deleting the third paragraph and replacing it with, "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet as follows:

"—on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Thursday, April 30, 2009"—

Mr. Mike Colle: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Dispense? I heard a no.

"—on Thursday, April 30, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, in Peterborough; and

"—on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, in Belleville; and

"—on Thursday, May 7, 2009, in Cornwall; and

"—on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, in Ottawa; and

"—on Wednesday, May 13, 2009, in Guelph; and

"—on Thursday, May 14, 2009, in London; and

"—on Tuesday, May 19, 2009, in Windsor; and

"—on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, in Goderich; and

"—on Thursday May 21, 2009, in North Bay

"for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and on May 25 and 26, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and" and

In the fourth paragraph, by deleting “Monday, May 11, 2009” and replacing it with “Wednesday, May 20, 2009” and by deleting “Thursday, May 14, 2009” and replacing it with “Thursday, May 28, 2009”; and

In the fifth paragraph, by deleting “Monday, May 25, 2009” and replacing it with “Wednesday, June 3, 2009”; and

In the seventh paragraph, by deleting “65 minutes” and replacing it with “10 hours.”

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1800 to 1810.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 116.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Shurman, Peter
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael	Yakabuski, John
MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Urbanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Moridi, Reza

Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Jaczek, Helena
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

We will now deal with the main motion. Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 116. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 10-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Same vote reversed? Agreed? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1813.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Joy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Judak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Kuczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Laffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Lees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Lormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Mular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Munster, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Nalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Near, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Neve, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
Neale, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Nehal, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Nicholson, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Niemi, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
North, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
North, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
North, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
North, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
North, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
North, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
North, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
North, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
North, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
North, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
North, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
North, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
North, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
North, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
North, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldeep Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Jerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craiton
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Firefighters), 2009, Bill 169, Mr. Arnott / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail (pompiers), projet de loi 169, M. Arnott	
First reading agreed to.....	6145
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	6145

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

National Volunteer Week	
Hon. Michael Chan	6145
Arts and cultural funding / Subventions pour les arts et la culture	
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	6145
National Volunteer Week	
Mr. Peter Shurman	6146
Arts and cultural funding	
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	6147
National Volunteer Week	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6147
Arts and cultural funding	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6147

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hospital funding	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6148
Cemeteries	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6148
Tuition	
Mr. Jim Wilson	6148

Ontario budget	
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	6149
Hospital funding	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	6149
Property taxation	
Mme France Gélinas	6149
Ontario budget	
Mr. Kuldip Kular.....	6149
Aggregate extraction	
Mr. Toby Barrett	6149
Cemeteries	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6150
Taxation	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	6150
Road safety	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6150
Lupus	
Mr. Bob Delaney	6150
Sales tax	
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	6151

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation / Attribution de temps	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6151
Mr. Bill Murdoch	6152
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	6152
Mme France Gélinas	6153
Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	6156
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6158
Mr. Howard Hampton	6159
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6160
Mr. John Yakabuski	6162
Mr. David Oraziatti	6164
Mr. Peter Shurman	6165
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	6166
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6167
Motion agreed to	6169

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 21 April 2009 / Mardi 21 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Road Safety Act, 2009, Bill 126, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2009 sur la sécurité routière, projet de loi 126, M. Bradley	
Mme France Gélinas	6127
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6130
Mrs. Linda Jeffrey	6133
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6133
Mr. Khalil Ramal	6133
Mr. Norm Miller	6134
Mme France Gélinas	6134
Third reading vote deferred	6134

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Helena Jaczek	6134
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6134
Legislative pages	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6135

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Randy Hillier	6135
Hon. George Smitherman	6135

Taxation

Mr. Randy Hillier	6136
Hon. George Smitherman	6136

Ontario budget

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6137
Hon. George Smitherman	6137

Ontario budget

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6138
Hon. George Smitherman	6138

Pension plans

Mr. Norman W. Sterling	6138
Hon. George Smitherman	6139

Pension plans

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6139
Hon. George Smitherman	6139

Workplace safety

Ms. Laurel C. Broten	6140
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6140
Mr. Pat Hoy	6140

Ontario budget

Mr. Jim Wilson	6141
Hon. George Smitherman	6141

Ontario budget

Mr. Michael Prue	6141
Hon. George Smitherman	6141

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Road Safety Act, 2009, Bill 126, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2009 sur la sécurité routière, projet de loi 126, M. Bradley	
Third reading agreed to	6142
Estimates	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6142

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr. Peter Shurman	6142
-------------------------	------

Queen's birthday

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6143
--------------------------------	------

Village of Manotick

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6143
------------------------	------

Niska North mill

Mr. Michael A. Brown	6143
----------------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk	6143
---------------------------	------

Electricity supply

Mr. Peter Tabuns	6144
------------------------	------

Mental health services

Mrs. Liz Sandals	6144
------------------------	------

Chiropractic services

Mr. Dave Levac	6144
----------------------	------

Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr. David Zimmer	6145
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
XI
-D23

Govern
Public



AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM

No. 138

N° 138

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

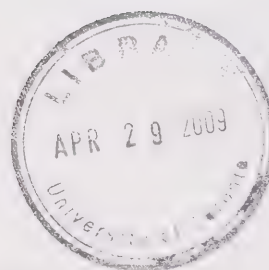
Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 22 April 2009

Mercredi 22 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / *Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I am now required to put the question. Mr. Duncan has moved second reading of Bill 162. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be deferred to deferred votes following question period today.

Second reading vote deferred.

COUNTERING DISTRACTED DRIVING AND PROMOTING GREEN TRANSPORTATION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 VISANT À COMBATTRE LA CONDUITE INATTENTIVE ET À PROMOUVOIR LES TRANSPORTS ÉCOLOGIQUES

Mr. Bradley moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 118, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of devices with display screens and hand-held communication and entertainment devices and to amend the Public Vehicles Act with respect to car pool vehicles / *Projet de loi 118, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'interdire l'usage d'appareils à écran et d'appareils portatifs de télécommunications et de divertissement et modifiant la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun à l'égard des véhicules de covoiturage.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton—Springdale.

I rise in the House today to I guess you'd say continue debate, although I'm beginning debate on third reading of legislation that, if passed, would make Ontario's roads safer and potentially save lives. I do so in the context—some who have been here in the House a while will remember when it was a rarity to have third reading of any particular bill. You had first reading, of course, which is the introduction of the bill, an extensive second reading and then committee; and then it came back for third reading, and it was almost on a nod. The practice has evolved—governments would say unfortunately, oppositions would say fortunately—so that there is now debate on third reading.

What I have been pleased to see with this bill is the degree of unanimity on the principle of the bill. During debate there was discussion about various aspects of the bill; some expressed concerns, some were apprehensive about certain parts of the bill, provisions of the bill. Then we went to committee and the public had an opportunity to make presentations to the committee on the legislation and be questioned by members of the Legislative Assembly who sat on the committee. Subsequent to that there was clause-by-clause analysis and consideration of the bill, and amendments could be put forward at that particular point in time. Then the legislation, when departing from the committee, discharged from the committee, now comes to us for third reading. I was extremely pleased with the degree of unanimity on the principle of the bill.

I mentioned, when I was leading off the second reading of the bill in the House, that my colleague Kevin Flynn from Oakville and my colleague John O'Toole from Durham, among other members of the assembly, but those two in particular, had shown an interest in this subject. I wanted to commend both of those individuals for some of the work they did in the early days when, I might add, it wasn't as popular a concept, yet we could see that in other jurisdictions people were moving forward with legislation of this kind.

I think we all recognize that new technologies have created some tremendous conveniences, but they need to be used with caution. I don't think there is a person anywhere who hasn't texted, e-mailed or talked on the phone while driving, even though we know it is dangerous to do so. Our eyes-on-the-road, hands-on-the-wheel legislation aims to stop the use of hand-held wireless communication devices such as cellphones while driving. The goal is not to inconvenience people but to make our roads safer

for them and for everyone else who shares our roads. For safety's sake, drivers should focus on one thing and one thing only: driving.

Research shows that a person who uses a cellphone while driving is four times more likely to be involved in a collision than if that person were simply focused on the task of driving. Who hasn't witnessed a driver who seemed intensely involved in a complex conversation on that person's cellphone, or watched as someone intermittently responded to e-mails or text messages as that person drove? Operating a motor vehicle must never become a secondary task. Driving is always the primary task for anyone who gets behind the wheel; anything less is unacceptable. Drivers focusing on the use of these devices put the lives of pedestrians, other drivers and themselves at serious risk.

Transport Canada estimates that driver distraction is a contributing factor in approximately 20% of collisions on our roads. There should be no doubt that those people who do not focus on the task of driving should in fact not be driving. Those who put others at risk for any reason should not be on the road and should be made to understand the potential consequences of their actions. It is time to take a tough stand and stop this dangerous behaviour on our roads. Our proposed legislation could prevent tragedies before they happen.

0910

With the increasing use of cellphones and other hand-held electronic devices, the time to deal with this issue is now. New technologies do not go away, they proliferate, and the hazards they represent can only increase. This issue will certainly not go away if we just choose to ignore it. We must tackle it head-on, and that's what this legislation is designed to do. If this legislation is passed, it will ban text messaging, e-mailing, dialling and chatting on hand-held wireless communication devices. It will also ban the use of other hand-held electronic entertainment devices while driving.

Let's be clear about one important caveat: Ontario is not proposing an all-out ban on these devices. We are simply asking drivers not to use hand-held wireless communications and electronic entertainment devices while they are driving a vehicle. The use of hands-free wireless communication devices will still be allowed. GPS units mounted on a dashboard will still be permitted as well. I would also like to emphasize that emergency phone calls to 911 using hand-held devices will be allowed. We know that police and emergency service personnel rely on calls from the public reporting collisions or dangerous drivers. It's just common sense. Any activity that divides a driver's attention from the task of driving should be avoided whenever possible.

This bill is about more than safer roads; it's also about cleaner air. You may have noticed that our proposed legislation is entitled the Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act. I would like to take a moment to explain to all members the green component of this legislation. But before I do so, I would like to again acknowledge some of the efforts of one of my

colleagues, Gilles Bisson from Timmins-James Bay, who brought forward a private member's bill in this regard, and the expressions that were brought to my attention by others.

Carpools are by definition environmentally friendly transportation solutions. Encouraging more Ontarians to share a ride is part of Ontario's plan to reduce harmful emissions, ease traffic congestion and fight climate change. The current definition of carpooling under the Public Vehicles Act has made it difficult for individuals in certain situations to form carpools to go to and from school, social events and even work. That is why we are proposing an amendment to the Public Vehicles Act that would make it easier for people to carpool. It would remove the barriers and red tape associated with carpooling in Ontario, in the hope that it will further encourage their use and help remove single-occupant vehicles from Ontario's highways.

In the distracted-driving and carpooling provisions of this legislation, our government has the support of many organizations. The Ontario Medical Association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Safety League and many others stood beside us when we first announced our plans last fall. I would also like to point out that our ministry has listened to industry feedback in response to both of these proposed measures. We both appreciate and have carefully considered their proposals. If the legislation is passed, we will continue to work together as we develop the supporting regulations.

Road safety is one of this government's top priorities. We need to do everything we can to eliminate dangers on our roads. Our message? That drivers must keep their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel at all times to prevent collisions. We must continue to ensure that we address new risks and hazards as they arise. As with all of the other safety reforms we have introduced, our purpose is to preserve and strengthen Ontario's outstanding record of safety on our roads. We are committed to maintaining Ontario's reputation for having some of the safest roads in all of North America and, indeed, the world. Bill 118 supports the McGuinty government's commitment to prevent injury and reduce traffic collisions. This proposed legislation will protect families and communities. It will make every Ontarian safer, and I urge all members to support this bill.

As I conclude my remarks on third reading, I would like to again pay tribute to Linda Jeffrey, the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Transportation, who has done so much work in regard to guiding this bill both through the Legislature and through committee. I believe she was actually a committee Chair when the legislation started out, but certainly she has carried the ball in committee. Again, I want to emphasize for the public out there more than members of the Legislature, because I think we tend to know that, that the role of a parliamentary assistant is extremely important. Very often, while ministers are those who are quoted or perhaps receive the

accolades—and the brickbats, I might add—it is actually parliamentary assistants who on so many occasions are the ones who are doing the heavy slogging. I can assure you that in the case of this legislation and the previous bill that was passed earlier this week, Linda Jeffrey was, at least as far as the government side is concerned, a person who carried the ball there.

I pay tribute to all members of the Legislature and the legislative committee who made a contribution to this. This is a piece of legislation that I think, Mr. Speaker, engenders the kind of unanimity that perhaps others don't. There are divisive issues in this House and there are those which tend to be based more on consensus. I suggest to you and to members of the House that consensus certainly is significant in this particular case.

So I thank all of those who have been involved. Staff of the Ministry of Transportation have done an outstanding job as well in helping to develop this legislation. In my own personal staff there have been people—I mentioned Michelle Baker previously and Bianca Bruni, both of whom have worked on this, as well as others within my office. I know that the opposition members have had available to them assistance from their research staffs and others in preparing for the legislation.

I thank members of the House for their consideration. I encourage them to pass this legislation and have it in effect at the earliest opportunity. Thank you, and I will now turn it over to Linda Jeffrey.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Brampton–Springdale.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

I rise in the House this morning to continue discussion on Bill 118, legislation that would help make our province's roads safer by reducing the distractions for drivers.

As Minister Bradley said, Ontario's roads have earned a reputation for being amongst the safest in North America. This is a record we have maintained for more than a decade. But as times change, we need to change with those times. New technologies are creating safety hazards and we need to address them.

To keep Ontario in the vanguard of road safety is a constant challenge. We must always be vigilant and ready to adopt new ways of dealing with today's ever-changing driving environment. Our proposed legislation addresses a timely road safety issue. It is also one that many other provinces, states and countries are beginning to recognize and acknowledge as an emerging danger on our roads. As Minister Bradley pointed out, we cannot underestimate the risks of modern technological distractions as they affect a driver's ability to concentrate on the road. Drivers who text, e-mail, dial or chat on their cellphones or other kinds of hand-held wireless communication devices instead of focusing on the road ahead are potentially dangerous drivers. Safety must always be a driver's first priority.

The first law of new technology is that it's useful, it will be used; and no one can deny that hand-held devices are useful and very convenient. Wireless phones are

among the fastest-growing consumer products in history. In fact, today half of all Canadians are mobile phone customers. The need to regulate their use depends how that use in certain contexts will create dangers and risks for the user and for others. The time to act is now. Now is the time to deal with this issue, before it gets out of hand. Bill 118 will help improve driver safety and, we believe, save lives. Now is the time to remind drivers to keep their eyes on the road and their hands on the wheel. The evidence speaks for itself.

0920

Research shows that drivers who use hand-held communication and electronic entertainment devices pose a significant risk to pedestrians, other drivers and themselves. For example, two expert studies have shown that there is a four-fold increase in collision risks when drivers are using cellphones. In addition, a US study found that using a hand-held wireless communication device was the most frequent type of secondary task performed by drivers. Results also show that it is the active engagement in a conversation that causes higher levels of driver distraction and not just the manual manipulation of the phone.

Nor should drivers be allowed to divert their attention to hand-held wireless entertainment devices while driving. The same risk is posed by the use of a hand-held electronic entertainment device such as an iPod or other portable MP3 players and gaming devices. Similarly, this bill addresses the hazards of trying to view display screens on devices unrelated to driving, such as laptop computers or DVD players, while driving. At the same time, it is important to remember that there are a number of valid exceptions. Bill 118 would allow the use of hands-free wireless communications devices such as Bluetooth devices, GPS units that are integrated into the vehicle or mounted on a dashboard, calls to 911, and use by emergency service personnel.

We're not alone in our thinking here. We have the support of many organizations that agree that now is the time to put a stop to distracted drivers who continue to text, e-mail and chat on their hand-held cellphones. We heard from a number of deputations who came to committee, one of those being the Sudbury and District Health Unit. They sent us a very thoughtful letter that I thought I would read into the record this morning. They indicate that, on behalf of the Sudbury and District Health Unit, they are writing to express their support of Bill 118:

"Mobile communications have become a part of everyday life as a means of keeping in touch with family, friends as well as participating in work activities while in transit from one place to another. One of the main reasons people give for purchasing a mobile phone is to be able to use it in emergencies ... yet recent estimates show that 85% of cellphone users use their phone while driving ... and 60% of their cellphone usage occurs while driving.... Cellphones are creating driver distraction and increasing the risk of injury and death on our roads.

"Research has shown that drivers are four times more likely to have a motor vehicle collision while using a

cellular telephone than when not using a cellular telephone, a risk similar to driving with a blood alcohol level at the legal limit.... In fact, cellphones may actually exhibit greater impairments than intoxicated drivers, and hands-free cellphones are no different than hand-held cellphones.... Some may think that public education would be sufficient to have people refrain from cellphone use while driving but in a recent poll, 60% of drivers indicated that they would not stop using cell phones when driving even when told their cellphone use makes them four times more likely to be involved in a collision.... Research participants commented that they had observed others driving erratically while using a cellphone but rarely thought cellphone use affected their driving, showing a disparity between self-perception and their actual driving performance."

The Sudbury and District Health Unit ends by saying:

"We believe that in passing Bill 118, Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, 2008, we are one step closer in improving the safety of our roads and reducing motor-vehicle-related injuries and deaths in Ontario."

If this legislation is passed, Ontario will join more than 50 worldwide jurisdictions that have laws in place to deal with this type of driver distraction. In Canada, similar restrictions are in place in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. In the United States, California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, New Jersey, New York and Washington have also taken action. Here at home, the Ontario Medical Association has urged this government to address the dangers of driving while using a cellphone.

Back in October, when we first announced our plans to move forward with this legislation, a number of our road safety partners stood beside us to lend their support. The minister mentioned many of them: the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Safety League and many, many others.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind members of some of the supportive words we received from those organizations on the days we heard from deputants. Deputy Commissioner Larry Beechey, speaking on behalf of the Ontario Provincial Police, noted that this legislation will help Ontarians get the message that "driving is not a part-time job; it's a full-time job.... Every one of our faculties is required to operate a motor vehicle." He sees this legislation as being a great tool for law enforcement officers across this province.

We heard from Dr. Suzanne Strasberg, president-elect of the Ontario Medical Association and a family doctor. She emphasized the importance of this legislation in preventing injuries by changing driver behaviour. "Every day," said Dr. Strasberg, "we see victims of road collisions, whether it be trauma in the emergency room or the ongoing treatment of injuries in a clinical setting.... Not only will this ban address the dangers caused by drivers distracted by their cellphones, BlackBerries and

other hand-held devices, but it has begun a dialogue among the people of Ontario."

It is a fact that Bill 118 is about changing driver behaviour, and changing behaviour is an enormous task that can't be accomplished overnight. There will, of course, always be those who think the rules do not apply to them, which is why Bill 118 carries a fine of between \$60 and \$500 upon conviction. With the help of police, our safety partners and the people of Ontario, we know that this legislation can make our roads safer places for everyone. Together, we must do more to save lives, prevent injuries and keep our communities safe. Our eyes-on-the-road, hands-on-the-wheel approach will actively prevent tragedies before they happen. It's time for our government to make the call to end this type of distracted driving.

As Minister Bradley noted, this bill also contains amendments to the Public Vehicles Act for removing restrictions on carpooling. We are proposing to amend the definition of a carpool vehicle to recognize informal carpools that operate between municipalities for purposes other than just home-to-work and work-to-home trips. These carpooling amendments provide a balance between legitimate carpools and scheduled commercial bus services, for which a licence is required.

Any step we can take that encourages more people to ride in fewer cars will help reduce our carbon footprint by reducing emissions, and that, in the end, benefits everyone.

I support Bill 118, and I urge all members in the House to support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would hope there will be further debate on this. Briefly, I have a few things to say on it, but I think we're all in agreement that any action we can take that would improve the safety of our roads is something that, as the minister said this morning, we'd certainly be in agreement with.

I'll be making some comments in a few minutes. They won't last any longer than the government spoke, so it's kind of a fair balance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I really am pleased to hear the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's comments on Bill 118, to improve highway safety in the province of Ontario. Certainly, this is a bill that had everybody's involvement. I know the member from Durham, who is here this morning, has certainly been a leading advocate on this issue for many, many years—a very consistent position from the member from Durham—and the member from Timmins—James Bay has brought forward private member's legislation in a similar vein to improve highway safety in the province of Ontario.

0930

It's interesting: Just yesterday I was on my way here. I left Peterborough very early, and there was a very tragic accident at the intersection of 115/35 and the 401. It was closed for half a day. There's an allegation that alcohol

was involved, that a driver was going the wrong way in exiting off the 115/35 and hit a van with four people in it, very early. Anything we can do to improve highway safety in a whole variety of areas is so very, very important. In this particular accident yesterday, I was listening to it on 680News, and I think by the grace of God it's lucky there wasn't a fatality at that situation there yesterday. Again, it goes a long way to improve road safety, an issue that I think reaches to all corners of this Legislature. We all want to improve road safety.

I certainly commend the minister, the parliamentary assistant, the member from Durham and the member from Timmins-James Bay, who I think deserve equal accolades on their work in bringing this bill to the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Response? Response? The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much. I was in deep conversation with my good friend Ted Arnott here about matters related to this bill, or peripherally to this bill.

I want to thank all members for their contribution to this debate, not only this morning but previously in committee, on second reading and in their general discussion of it. I think the bill has been strengthened, and the understanding of the bill strengthened, because of the contribution of all members of this House. Although one can never presume what will happen in the House, I'm optimistic from what I've heard from all members on all sides of the House that this bill will be passed. We will see whether my optimism is justified when it finally comes to a vote. I look forward with anticipation as well to my friends in the opposition as they offer their comments on third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond, and also the very accommodating remarks by the minister this morning as well as his parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton-Springdale, who has indeed worked hard on this. In fact, some would argue she could easily be the minister. But that's another story for another day.

I suspect that the other member who was mentioned who could easily be encouraged would be Kevin Flynn. Actually, he would be another person who would like to be minister, I suppose, another time and another day. They've worked hard, and as I can attest, having been parliamentary assistant several times in my 13- or 14-year career, the minister was right: It's a lot of the heavy lifting and the slugging, and none of the glory or the pay. But anyway, I digress.

I want to first of all say, on behalf of the opposition and as the critic at the moment, that it's a privilege to have this brief amount of time, about an hour.

Here's a bit of history. I think it's important to put the history in context. I'm flattered by the minister's remarks this morning, and I'll tell you why. I printed off of the legislative website here—this particular policy was first

introduced by myself at the suggestion of a constituent, who shall remain nameless, who brought it to my attention. They came into my office in Bowmanville and said to me, "John, I just witnessed somebody going through a red light." I said, "Well, there are provisions under the Highway Traffic Act where they could be given a ticket, or even under Road Watch they could be cautioned by the police. If witnessed by the police, they probably would have got a ticket. It would have been failing to yield and it's probably about four points or two points and a substantial ticket." But she said, "Oh no, no, John. You miss it completely. They were on the cellphone and they didn't even see the light."

That's the first time I actually saw the light. Thanks to my constituent, who didn't want her name mentioned, I looked into other jurisdictions about technology, and in fact it was in place in some jurisdictions. So even to the credit of myself and my constituent, other jurisdictions had actually leaped ahead of us. In fact, at that time I had a daughter living in Australia. She brought to my attention as well that in Australia it was already prohibited. In fact, it's pretty strictly prohibited there.

But anyway, I introduced a bill in 2000 as a result of that. That was in 1999-2000. The bill was Bill 102, and it did make it into the session. I also introduced it again because, of course, there was an election shortly after all that, and it was Bill 49. That was introduced in 2002.

By the way, we were government at the time, and even our government didn't see fit to implement the bill. I introduced it and it got debated, but it didn't get the light of day.

At that time, I'd like to think that former members of the Legislature—I believe Mr. Turnbull was the Minister of Transportation. I spoke to him directly, and I felt confident that he was going to move forward with it. For some reason, he didn't have the courage that Mr. Bradley is showing here today.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Some of what I'm saying is a bit tongue-in-cheek, but it's also important for history, for my grandchildren. They'll be able to read it—probably they won't, but they could if they wanted to, I'm sure.

The next bill was in 2003, right after the election. I was so convinced, because people kept reminding me. I met with the current chief of the Ontario Provincial Police back then, when he was chief of Toronto, and I would say I met with the head of the police association. I met with some of the enforcement people in Durham and I actually attended an inquest—it was called the Schewe inquest—which profoundly changed my intensity on the bill.

The inquest was about an accident that happened in Pickering, which is in Durham. There was an inquest held to see if they could improve the conditions which were, in some part, a cause of the accident. At this inquest, it turned out there was a father and his daughter who were both killed while crossing a railway track. It turned out the father was bringing his little daughter to, I guess, the daycare, and he was going to work. He was

just passing the phone over, I believe, to say goodbye to the mother, and they went across a level crossing and both were killed. It was tragic. So from that point on, I saw that if any of us here could do any one thing that would save even one life, then we would have done something of value.

I kept pressing with the bill again, with Bill 23, which was introduced in December. For some reason, the bill got stalled all the time. Now, I did make improvements; I didn't just reintroduce the same thing. I listened to the stakeholders—the CAA, which was one of them. The young lobbyist was a helpful person in some respects too. In fact, they wanted me to introduce a portion of the bill which my bill was able to provide. It was able to provide for G1 licences to be prohibited from it; that was in my bill. But they wanted me to separate it from the bill and introduce it. I refused because I felt it should be looked at as a whole policy, not just penalizing young people. They gave that bill, actually, to Mr. Flynn, and Mr. Flynn introduced it. So he does have some attachment, but its genesis came from my constituents back in 1999.

I am just the courier here. The minister's the hero, basically. He's doing the right thing—which is really what we're here to do. Often, as he said in his remarks in a compliant way, that doesn't actually happen very often here.

Actually, more recently I had introduced Bill 40, which was introduced in March 2008, a little over a year ago, and now we sit with this Bill 118. That gives you the history and the genesis of this idea, which many other jurisdictions already use.

I did participate in the hearings and felt that—I have a copy of an annotated version of the bill, which means it reflects the changes, amendments and additions. I argued all through it that there's a lot of time spent here—and this is not a criticism; it's more or less to the minister's staff, not the minister. The minister didn't actually write it; he instructed these intelligent, capable people he referred to to get on with drafting the bill. Most of this stuff should have been handled in regulation. The reason I say that is because the technology we see today will be redundant in two years.

0940

Follow me along now. I'll give you an example of what I mean by that. When I started looking at it, cell-phones were like a shoe box, and now they're almost invisible. In fact, there will be no more keys on the communication devices. It will all be voice-activated. In fact, our Hansard here is now using voice-activated software to record the minutes, which is being used. When you don't need to use little keys to text-message and to e-mail and to google and all that stuff—that's coming. But the providers of these devices like to implement them slowly so you can buy one, it becomes redundant, you throw it out and buy the next version. It becomes redundant, you throw it out and you buy the next one. RIM gets richer, the shareholders are all happy and the dumps are all full of technology, basically. It's tragic, really. But that is what will happen, and some of it is through pure innovation that hasn't caught up with the devices yet.

I can tell you, in my riding—as many of the other members will attest—I was just recently on a farm, one of the leading farms in Durham, where they have tractors that are auto-steer; they don't even drive them. You know what I mean? It's almost unimaginable. They have a transmission and receiver station in the centre of the farm—they farm about 5,000 acres—and the tractor is steered by GPS. It's incredible. They currently have to have somebody in the vehicle actually looking at the stock market or reading the paper or whatever they do. But it's called auto-steer; it's incredible. I'm sure the member from Bruce would have those kinds of operations.

I'm saying that if you look at the vehicles and the technology on our roads today, I forecast that in five years there will be some of this intelligent transportation; ITS stuff will be around. I worked in computers for a good part of my life, and I can see that this is just the beginning of technology. I see it in my real life each day. I get excited about innovation because young people, like the pages here, will see this in their lifetime.

My son-in-law is a very talented aeronautical engineer, with a Master's from UCLA, all that stuff, a test pilot. He told me that basically he flies F-18s—and now he flies 747s for Cathay Pacific. I'm very proud of him, but also, they really don't fly them. They land them. It's completely automated. They flip it on autopilot when they're in the air and they do preparation things—flipping switches and tuning in certain things about descent and directions that are given by the tower, and these can be voice-activated as well. They're really there to make sure that the system and their interaction—imagine how that could improve safety on our roadways, with intelligent transportation. You'd have a transponder and a receiver. The receiver would disable the driver, and the driver would only be there to make sure that they get to where they're going. That's the future. That will happen in your lifetime, guaranteed. We're designing stuff today that will be obsolete in five years, guaranteed.

I'm not going to use the whole hour, that's for sure, to give some people some rest here. There's a whole section in the bill that talks about how part VI of the act is amended to add the following, and it says hand-held devices are prohibited.

Section 78 talks about how no person shall drive a vehicle while holding a device. Under "Entertainment devices" it describes all of that.

Then it goes into a whole subsection here, subsection (4), on exemptions, which the minister has talked about.

Then it has a whole section on regulations:

"(7) The Minister may make regulations,

"(a) prescribing devices for the purpose of subsections (1) and (2);

"(b) prescribing persons...."

Ambulance operators, fire, police and other emergency vehicles are excluded from this.

I think the whole thing could have been handled in exemptions. He has gone on to include entertainment devices. Right now, even with BlackBerries, you can ac-

tually surf the Internet, download files, watch a movie and look at pictures. They're a computer. They are larger—I used to program 1401 computers in COBOL, many, many years ago. These are bigger and better devices—and I hate to use “devices” there. That's my only comment.

One little question I had here is—under this exemption section, which says,

“Same

“(6) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply if all of the following conditions are met:

“(1) The motor vehicle is off the roadway or is lawfully parked on the roadway”—that they aren't subject to the violation.

“(2) The motor vehicle is not in motion.” In other words, you're stopped. That's good.

“(3) The motor vehicle is not impeding traffic.” That could be challenged in court. If I'm on the road and I'm doing this and I'm not impeding traffic, that could be a subjective kind of interpretation.

I'll just leave it at that. The regulations section, as I said, could handle it all.

The other part—and this is going to conclude, I think—on the Public Vehicles Act, this one here, I'm happy with. As the minister said, Mr. Bisson, the member from Timmins-James Bay, actually did work on this—and he brings up the very good idea of carpooling. What this is specific about is that “carpooling” is a bit restrictive. I'd encourage it more. I think the minister may be revisiting this in a future bill—or we will, when we're government next time. Here's what it says. It describes carpooling—more or less, to prohibit certain classes of vehicles. I think it's to protect the TTC and Coach Canada and all those other commercial operators. I guess their ministry's advice is to try to get along with people. They don't want to have any competition out there. That would be bad.

“Carpool vehicles

“(2) Subject to subsection (4), a public vehicle and a taxicab do not include a motor vehicle, as defined in the Highway Traffic Act, with a seating capacity of not more than 10 persons”—it could be a small coach, I guess; it could be a limousine, too—“while it is transporting not more than 10 persons”—so it's a small number—“including the driver on a one-way or round trip where the taking of passengers is incidental to the driver's purpose for the trip.”

That's very good. How does this apply? It could apply, in many cases, to people carpooling to go to work, and I think that's what it's intended to do. Carpooling to work, carpooling to shop—you could get away with that, but it could probably be challenged—if you were going to Buffalo for a shopping weekend and there are 10 or 20 persons from a women's group or a men's group or church or whatever type of group.

This one here gets a bit nitpicky, a bit red tape-ish. It says:

“(4) In order to be excluded from the definitions of public vehicle and taxicab, the use of a motor vehicle as described in subsection (2) must also meet the following conditions:”

This is interesting too:

“(1) No fee is charged or paid to the driver, owner or lessee of the motor vehicle for the passengers' transportation, except an amount to reimburse the expenses of operating the motor vehicle as described in subsection (2).”

There's a lot of red tape there. In other words, you can't get paid any more than your gas money. I guess we'll have to have that defined once you get into the minutia part of it. I think it's unnecessary intrusion, red tape. Somebody's going to take it to court: “I didn't pay more than that.” How about the oil? How about the tires? How about the cost of running the vehicle—whatever. You know what I mean. Right now, it probably costs about 75 cents a kilometre to operate a vehicle, including depreciation—maybe a dollar, really—gas, oil, insurance, depreciation, regular maintenance, the time of my life that I've sold for the hour. So, that, to me, is poorly drafted. I'm not the lawyer—but whoever drafted this probably only makes \$150,000 or \$160,000 a year. Some of it is unnecessary, really. It goes on to great extent in here.

0950

I think the intent is very laudable and very commendable, and I would support it, while at the same time cautioning—how about church groups? Some churches in my riding are encouraging young families to attend service—of whatever religion, Christian or otherwise—and they pick them up and drop them off, or they pick them up and maybe they spend the whole day there celebrating different things. Maybe somebody else takes them home. You could argue that this thing legitimizes carpooling maybe to work, but I think carpooling is good for a lot of things, even taking a group of friends to theatre in Toronto or to a ball game—a lot of minutia.

This bill is well intended—both sections of it. We would be supporting it. We add our value to it that it would be much more efficient to have handled this in regulation on the first part—that is, the technology piece, because the technology will change and somebody will say, “That's not as it's described in the bill. This is now 2013, and my device is a GPS, a phone, a video camera, a tape recorder, a computer and a communications device, and it's also racking up my expense report as I travel,” and it doesn't qualify, and it will have to be changed. They will have to redraft the bill and spend a lot of time unnecessarily here, as I am this morning.

I do want to thank all the people who participated in trying to make our roads safer while at the same time not being an in-your-face nanny state running everything. What it does involve is, as I said, the reference to the young family whose lives were tragically changed. Also, the enforcement provisions in the bill—I think this will be the challenge. Newfoundland and Labrador was the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement the bill, and the enforceability had been challenged in court. I found it rather odd because some members here, I'm sure, have been to Newfoundland and Labrador, and there's probably nobody on most of their roads. When you are coming across Newfoundland over to St. John's, you will see

that there is no cell service in most of Newfoundland and Labrador. They have the cellphones basically for St. John's. It was challenged in court, and it did withstand a court challenge on enforceability. I think this will be the big challenge.

If there are two or more people in the car, how do you determine who is on the phone? Do you understand? You could have a device, quite honestly, today—the police have told me this—that you could use to track a vehicle and know they're on the phone. There is a signal going on.

My sense was this: I like this area of technology. That's why I'm spending some time, because there may even be ministry people listening. There are devices today—I worked for General Motors. I worked in the industry for quite a few years and I know that they have a program now called OnStar. Ford and Chrysler all have different programs, which is Bluetooth technology and does a lot of things for you. It can book ball and NHL tickets for you; it can do everything. You just say, "Hello, I want to do this, that"—it will book you a hotel room. It's just incredible what it will do. My point, though, is that they also know that they could have a technical device in the car that would shut down the communications after a length of time.

The scientific evidence by Dr. Redelmeier and others proves that the longer you are on the phone and the more convoluted the argument, the higher the risk probability goes up of the four-to-one that Minister Bradley mentioned. I would expect that the industry, like they did with airbags and seat belts, will innovate devices that will cut conversations off. If you're talking to your stockbroker or your divorce lawyer, that's the wrong time and the wrong place to be using a cellphone while driving. It should be banned. But how do you tell people how to behave? Educate them first, and that's what this debate is theoretically about: to educate. To the minister: That's how I would implement it.

What you're doing with the speed limiters is a good idea. You actually soft-enforce for the first six months. That's a good idea. With this bill here, I'd do it the same as they did with seat belts. I'd implement the bill and proclaim it, and you can do a bit of public relations stuff on it. Then what you do is you give the police intervention tools like they have with seat belts; they do blitzes. It's mostly to educate drivers to conform with the rules, but also to educate them about the risks to themselves and others. That's where the duty of public service really begins: implementation not with a hammer but with a pen. Even for the first offence, I would mandate that they take a driver distraction course. There are courses put on by the CAA and others that say, "See the risk you are presenting to yourself?" Everybody thinks that they're immune to accidents, until it happens to them. Well, there's a very good example of how the CAA and other stakeholders, like the Insurance Bureau of Canada and the rest, could come forward and help to implement the bill as partners in this with the minister. I hope they do, because I really think the success is that it actually, as we said at the beginning, saves lives.

I just know that there's more here than we really realize today, because with more people and more cars on more roads and more trucks and all the rest of it, and in bad weather etc., these are challenging times.

I'm going to digress for a minute and just talk about a couple of little things. There's a couple of things that are changing in regulation. The minister has been very busy these days, not just on Bill 126, which was the graduated driver's licence changes—I think that's already passed—but on Bill 118 as well. Also, the speed limiter law that's been introduced is getting some discussion, and I would say, we would always want to do whatever makes our roads safe and get that right. The minister is working in co-operation with Quebec. I'm following it. It's quite good.

The other part that came down was the long continuous vehicle, the LCV, or truck trains. There's a lot of stuff on the roads and now we've got a confusing signal. This is not a complaint, this is an observation. It's also part of communication. We've really got four speeds on our 400-series highways. One of them is legal: the posted speed, which is 100 kilometres an hour. Now, it's not very popular when governments say, "Well, we're going to make the speed 120." Then there's other people who say that we should have photo radar. There's a whole bunch of issues around this. I'm saying that now we've got four speeds. We've got 100, which is the posted one. We've got the soft enforce on 100, though; it's really enforced at about 115 to 120, where they actually give you the ticket. We've got 90 for the long continuous vehicles, and now we've got 105, which is for the trucks with the speed limiters on them. I think there's a need to spend some time educating the public, but the ideal state would be to have clarity and simplicity, and that, to me, would be to change the speed to 115 or 120, which I understand the 400s are designed to, and at the end of the day, enforce it. Use whatever tools you need—I don't need to tell you what they are; you know them—and enforce it. That's the key. Send the right signal that these are the rules of the road.

I think that the wise thing, again, in compliment to the minister, is the implementation plan, which is most important to watch. He is going to have a pilot on this long continuous vehicle thing, which is good and that's something that needs to happen. But when we make changes, a big part of it is education. When I see inordinately large fines—and in Bill 126, some of the fines were almost scary. I mean, I am certainly going to behave myself, more than I ever did, on the roads because some of the fines are prohibitive—very, very expensive fines. Some of them are \$2,000 and \$3,000 if you make a violation.

With the limited time left, having used precisely the same amount of time as the parliamentary assistant from Brampton–Springdale and the minister, I will also yield the floor.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. O'Toole has ably spoken to this bill, enlarged on it, embellished and given us a lot of detail and anecdote. I want to say that I think it does

make sense to have legislation in place to protect the driving public from drivers who are distracted. And so to the Minister of Transportation, I hope that this bill goes forward well. The question I have is, given the realities, given the evidence, why wasn't this bill brought forward earlier?

One of the things that the minister has talked about is allowing carpooling to go ahead. There is an organization called PickupPal that arranges ride-sharing over the Internet. They would not be prosecuted under this legislation, but they're currently ceasing their operations. I'd ask the minister to look at how things could be arranged so that PickupPal could be allowed to continue operating and we don't lose the opportunity to have a viable Internet-based ride-sharing operation continue on. The problem always is, if something ceases operations, it's very difficult to bring it back into existence.

1000

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I wanted to make some comments on what the member from Durham said. I just want to congratulate him on the hard work that he did to bring this issue forward. I know that he was part of the seed as to why the government brought forward this legislation, and I know firsthand that private members' legislation is a challenging prospect, having tried to bring forward sprinkler legislation. So I congratulate him; it's good to stay on top of an issue, and certainly he has done that. In hearings, we heard some very thoughtful debate and discussion, and we heard some of that this morning from him.

I would agree with him that now is the time to act, and I had firsthand knowledge of this over the weekend. I was picking up my son from residence in late afternoon, and as I turned the corner in a parking lot, someone was pulling out in the darkness, blindsided, holding a cellphone to their ear. This is a constant. I think everyone in this Legislature and across Ontario has experienced a near miss with somebody holding a cellphone to their ear, distracted, trying to do too many tasks at the same time.

There isn't anything that is more important than keeping both your eyes and your hands on the wheel, and certainly this government understands that. We're taking action, and I feel, having heard the comments from all sides this morning, that we're going to get support for that. There's a knowledge and an acknowledgment within Ontario that there's too much technology in the cars. We need to pay attention. There's nothing more important than our families and our loved ones in behind us while we're driving. We need to make sure that distractions are at a minimum, and certainly other jurisdictions have demonstrated this works. These new laws will protect all users in Ontario and keep us at the forefront as leaders on road safety, so I'm happy to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to say that the member for Durham deserves credit for the extraordinary work that he's done on this legislation. I want to thank the Minister

of Transportation for his work as well, but the member for Durham has been working on this issue for, what, six years, John? Seven?

Mr. John O'Toole: Forever.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Forever. And it's been a source of interest to all of us in this House, the way this member has brought forward an issue, shown persistence, had a good idea and continued to advocate for it in spite of a lot of questions, and initially some opposition, I would say. The member for Durham does an extraordinary job on behalf of his constituents on so many issues. He's actively engaged in all the issues that come within the responsibility of the provincial government, and he also looks after his constituents in a way that I think is second to none. That is largely why he has been rewarded with the support that he has received through the years, having served here now since 1995, and hopefully for many, many years to come.

But this is an issue that I certainly have studied with some interest too. I have to admit that from time to time, while I'm driving to and from Toronto and when I'm going to constituency events in my riding, my cellphone has gone off and I've answered it and chatted to my staff or to constituents who have been able to get my cellphone number, and also my BlackBerry. When this law comes into force, I'm going to have to change my ways. I'm going to have to put my BlackBerry, I think, in the glove box for the first few weeks so I can get out of the habit of using it while I'm driving, and pull over on the side of the road, perhaps.

But the fact is, I believe that the government is correct to be taking action in this regard in response to the concerns that have been presented by the member for Durham. I think it is appropriate that we continue to find ways to improve the safety on our roads, something that all of us believe in and share as a view and a belief.

I know the minister is aware of some of the roadwork that needs to be done in Wellington-Halton Hills. In fact, I had a chance to talk to him about one of the road issues, and I was sorry to distract him when he was getting ready to respond to members after he gave his initial speech. But I want to thank the minister for the work that he has done on this issue as well, and again commend the member from Durham.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Response, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to acknowledge the remarks by the member from Toronto-Danforth, and I agree with what he said, that we agree with this. But he brings up a point on the carpooling issue, and I think it's one that needs a bit more time on task. That is, when you think of students commuting—the beginning of the school year, pooling—a parent takes three or four of them, and then they aren't completing the trip, so they would potentially be in problems. So I think there's something to be said there, and the member makes a good point.

I think the parliamentary assistant from Brampton-Springdale talked about her experiences, as all of us have had, and the idea of multi-tasking today.

I thank all the people for their complimentary remarks. We all come here with the purpose to try and do something. This, in the overall scheme of things, is just one small thing to have had a hand in, but we all do work hard.

The member from Wellington-Halton Hills said of his own experience that all of us need to be educated. The final words that I would say, for me, when I used to be talking about this, and it seems like for eternity I was talking about it—now what will I actually talk about? Maybe it would be pensions. I'm very passionate about pensions as well.

But here's the key: How to summarize this is to keep your eyes on the road, your hands on the wheel and your mind on the job. That's what driver distraction is: multi-tasking, whether it's technology, an intense conversation or a distraction which is coming—electronic billboards are distracters. It really is a task, in today's world of gridlock, with electronic billboards and all the distracters, to keep your mind on the job. Driving is a privilege, not a right. So I commend the minister for doing the right thing, and I would be supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This legislation makes sense. We all know drivers, pedestrians and cyclists who've had at least one bad experience with a distracted driver talking on their cellphone. I've been in a car when someone has taken out their BlackBerry and positioned it on the top of the wheel so they could read the BlackBerry as they were driving. I have to say: It was not a comforting experience. We had an interesting discussion. I try not to drive with that person. I tried to move their attention beyond the BlackBerry and beyond the hood. Having legislation in place may make it much easier for others who point out that it's a problem to read your BlackBerry while you're driving.

The question that I raised in my earlier comments is why Ontario is taking this long to move forward with this legislation. Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, many US states and 30 countries have restricted the use of cellphones while driving. There's a significant amount of evidence that has been cited by other speakers to support tighter restrictions on cellphone use while driving. An Australian study in 2005, and you may well have referenced this on the government benches, showed that motorists who use cellphones while driving are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. This finding was supported by a University of Toronto analysis of accidents in Toronto itself. Another study out of the University of Utah concluded that talking on a cellphone while driving is as dangerous as driving drunk—including reading your BlackBerry. Canadian studies show that 20% of all collisions in Canada have distracted driving as a contributing factor.

The Ministry of Transportation has indicated that fines will be set at between \$50 and \$500, and no demerit points will be taken for violations. In the end, the fine structure will determine whether this legislation works.

We should look at other provinces when we're determining what fines are necessary in preventing the use of cellphones while driving. There's enough evidence in Canada to undertake that analysis. This law is already in place in other jurisdictions. In Quebec, there is a three-month grace period followed by a \$100 fine. Nova Scotia has \$165 as a first-time-offender fine and \$335 for third-time offences.

Along those lines, enforcement is going to be crucial as to whether this act is of consequence or simply something that occasionally gets cited when people are upset by an accident. Police resources, as we know, are strained, and enforcing this law can be resource-intensive. The government, to our knowledge, has not addressed how this additional responsibility will be resourced. I look forward to the Minister of Transportation addressing that, if not this morning, then on another occasion.

We're pleased that this bill was amended during the committee stage. For example, before being amended, this bill did not draw a clear line between the display screen of a device that could receive information and that of an entertainment device. What it meant was this: If you had an iPod plugged into your car stereo, simply because it was hand-held and had a display screen, you could be fined. The bill would have banned an iPod from being used in this way, although that's actually not different from simply using a car stereo. So we're happy that this minor but useful point was amended in the process of going through the bill.

1010

We're pleased that the government took this opportunity to amend the Public Vehicles Act to end the antiquated restrictions on ride-sharing and allow green companies like PickupPal to operate. For those of you who are watching and aren't familiar with it, PickupPal is a company that arranges ride-sharing over the Internet. They don't take a fee for arranging rides; they make money through Internet advertising. This helps people carpool to get to work and to go longer distances. These are good services. They contribute to lowering carbon emissions. They are the direction we should be moving in to ensure that there are fewer cars on the road. But because the bill hasn't passed yet, the Ontario Highway Transport Board went through with issuing a decision against PickupPal, as I assume they're required to do, ordering the company to cease most of its operations. We urge the minister to find a way to allow PickupPal to continue operating, even though an order has been issued against it, because as I said in my earlier remarks, once something is shut down, it can be extraordinarily difficult to get it up and running again.

I know I will surprise you in saying that my remarks have almost come to their end, to the great pleasure of the Minister of Transportation and the despair of other ministers on government benches who wanted more guidance in their future endeavours.

We are happy to support this bill. I think we can all agree that when it comes to distractions when you're driving your car or truck, it's certainly an issue that needs to be taken seriously.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

There being none and the clock moving on, this House will recess—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm sorry. I should have asked for further debate.

Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 118.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved the bill do now pass and be named as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have the orders of the day, and it says, "No further business this morning."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Now we've arrived at the point I was trying to get at anyway. This House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Good morning. This morning, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome a number of coaches to the Legislature as part of Ontario Coaches Week; they are over there. First of all, I would like to welcome Ms. Susan Kitchen, who is the executive director of the Coaches Association of Ontario. I would also like to welcome Jeremy Cross, Jenna Falls, Ann Doggett, Jaime Sparkes and Jessica Taggio—all of them are coaches—and all the other coaches who are here today. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce a student who's here from the University of Akron, in Ohio, from the Bliss Institute. He's working with me as an intern student. His name is Richard Wall, and he's done some extremely good work on the Substitute Decisions Act. I'd like to congratulate him on the great work he's doing and thank him, and I'd like members to recognize Richard Wall.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Ontario used to be the economic engine of Confederation, but under your watch, Premier, we've become its caboose. Last week we received our first equalization payment from the federal government. Other provinces are now supporting us.

Premier, what is your government's plan to return Ontario from have-not to have status?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Answer the question.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will, I will; give me a chance. There's no winning here; there's none whatsoever.

I thank the honourable member for her question. I think she recognizes as well, though, that Ontario remains one of only three provinces that are net contributors to the federation. We're proud to be in that position. The fact that we are receiving equalization is undeniable, but what Ontarians need to understand is that we're paying ourselves with our own money; I think it's important to understand that.

Our recent budget speaks to the challenges of the day. It is designed specifically to build both a more caring and a more competitive Ontario. So at the same time that, for example, we're increasing the Ontario child benefit and building affordable housing, we are also reducing business taxes and personal taxes, and putting our economy on a stronger footing so that we can regain the strength that we need to support our schools and our health care and supports for our vulnerable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, that simply isn't good enough. Since January alone, we've lost 117,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. That's 117,000 breadwinners, 117,000 providers and 117,000 moms and dads with families that depend on them.

We can't lead the nation when Ontarians can't find meaningful work. Other provinces are dealing with this and have moved in front of us. Premier, when will you commit to returning Ontario to "have" status?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague is absolutely right: There have been significant job losses. This does cause devastation to Ontario communities, but, more importantly, to individual families.

I know that my colleague will recognize that this is not something that is solely being experienced here in Ontario; it's being experienced right across the country and, indeed, throughout most of the world. But I am proud of the budget that we have put forward and I would ask my honourable colleague for her support in moving ahead with this budget as quickly as we can. We know that the single most important thing we can do to strengthen this economy is to move forward with our package of comprehensive tax reforms that, among other things, moves us towards a single sales tax, lower taxes for our businesses and lower taxes for Ontarians themselves.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Premier is quickly becoming the next Bob Rae. Faced with tough economic times, he has become an ideologue with old, tired answers to new, complex problems.

Premier, won't you admit that your exhausted government has run out of ideas, and we're now left at the mercy of other provinces for Ontarians' well-being?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the things that we did before we moved ahead with this budget is solicited, in a very meaningful way, the advice of the members of the opposition. It was modest at best. I would argue that

the advice that we received from some was to make cuts; advice that we are building too many hospitals, too many roads, too many bridges and the kind of absolutely essential infrastructure that creates jobs in the short term and enhances our productivity in the long term.

We will be moving ahead. We will continue to find ways to strengthen this economy, to build both a more competitive and a more caring Ontario.

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is again to the Premier. Today is Earth Day. All across Ontario people are looking for ways to improve and protect our environment. We all know that individual actions multiplied by thousands of people can have great economic benefits to our environment. Premier, why are you stifling those actions with massive tax increases?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to draw my colleague's attention to an announcement we made just yesterday. I had the opportunity to visit St. Paul, I think it was, yesterday here in Toronto, an elementary school. While there, we announced that we're investing \$550 million into retrofitting at least 1,000 Ontario schools. I'll tell you why I think that's such a great idea. Not only will it create 5,500 jobs, not only will it reduce energy bills for our school boards when it comes to heating and cooling their schools, but at the same time I'm not sure there's a better place for us to practise energy conservation than in our schools, where our kids can see first-hand the positive effects of that kind of a collective action.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We're hearing a lot of talk over here, but let's take a look at an example. The Green Energy Act is a good example of where your actions contradict your rhetoric. On the one hand, you're encouraging people to do home energy audits and retrofits. On the other hand, you're taxing the cost of all these green renovations. At a time when Ontarians are stretched thin, how can you possibly think that they can afford these retrofits that you're talking so much about?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the things that, at its core—and our families have many hopes and many higher aspirations, and they have some fears too. They have some real concerns. But I think the single most important issue they want us to address right now is, “Are there going to be jobs there for me and are there going to be jobs there for my kids?” We are absolutely committed to ensuring that we inspire confidence in the people of Ontario. We are prepared to take whatever actions are necessary to strengthen this economy. That means reducing business taxes. It means reducing personal taxes. It means moving ahead with a single sales tax. And by the way, it means moving ahead with a higher Ontario child benefit. It means investing in affordable housing. Those are the kinds of things that we're doing, because they speak to the needs, the hopes, and they address the concerns of Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: These answers are why this government cannot be taken seriously. Raising taxes in the middle of a recession is exactly the last thing you should be doing. Every time it's been tried, it has failed. Why do you expect us to believe it could possibly be different this time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I understand where my colleague is coming from on this score. She's in keeping with the philosophy embraced by this Conservative Party. They believe that in the face of the greatest economic challenge that we have stared into in the last 80 years, we should do nothing, and certainly we should make no difficult decisions. They think that if we hide under these desks for the next two years, somehow the economy is going to restore itself on its own, and we need do nothing. We disagree with that. We think we have to take some responsibility. We think we have to show leadership. That's why we're making important decisions on behalf of Ontario families, who want to strengthen their economy so that we're in a position, in a sustainable way, to support their health care, their schools, their support for their most vulnerable and to ensure we have at all times the capacity to create good jobs for themselves and their kids.

1040

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontario needs a long-term industrial strategy rooted in green energy projects. But to ensure that green energy jobs are created here, we need a strong buy-Ontario program. New Democrats support a 60% Ontario content requirement for all green energy projects in this province, just as they do in Quebec. When is this government going to finally specify an Ontario content target for all new green energy projects?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had this important conversation many times in this House and I assume we'll have it on an ongoing basis and I'm fine with that. I would ask my colleague, as she pushes hard for us to adopt ever more protectionist policies, to keep in mind that we do a lot of trading with the outside world. Eighty-five per cent of the cars that we make here in Ontario we sell to the Americans. If they decide that they're not going to buy our cars because we make them here, we are in serious trouble. So we want to do as much as we possibly can to encourage Ontarians to take advantage of products and services developed here, produced here, sold here in the province of Ontario. At the same time we want to be mindful of the fact that we rely on trade with the outside world to generate the wealth we need that supports our schools and our health care and our jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We're looking for green jobs in this province. That's what we're looking for. A 60% local content requirement has already worked in Quebec.

There are thousands and thousands of new, good-paying jobs there, including at the only mass-production wind turbine manufacturer in all of Canada. With 300,000 manufacturing jobs being lost in this province, why is this government still stubbornly refusing to implement a real buy-Ontario program for our green energy products?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague knows that Minister Smitherman is consulting on what might be the right number for this particular matter. But I would hope that we'd get her support when it comes to our new Green Energy Act. It has been received internationally as being very bold, very progressive and puts us at the front of the line in North America. Our intention is to create 50,000 new jobs. It's to unleash an explosion of economic activity and new investment in energy from renewables.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleagues opposite may not be particularly enamoured with this notion of energy from renewable sources, but we think it's a smart way to go and we think that Ontarians want us to do this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier talks a good game when it comes to green jobs and green energy but the government's talk is cheap. Its watered-down approach only requires 25% domestic content for public transit vehicles. New Democrats think that should be 50%. This government has no domestic content policy requirements for green energy projects at all. We say it should be 60%. With so many Ontarians in need of good-paying manufacturing jobs, why won't you commit to a 50% requirement for new energy projects?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to assure my honourable colleague that Minister Smitherman is consulting on the appropriate number. But I do want to bring home to her and members of the House just how important a signal we send to the international investment community when it comes to our new Green Energy Act.

I want to quote briefly a story that appeared in the *Toronto Star* just last week. It says:

"Asia's largest maker of wind turbines is seriously eyeing up the Ontario market as a potential home for new manufacturing, citing what it considers the right combination of policies, infrastructure and local activity.

"Tulsi Tanti, founder and chair of Suzlon Energy Ltd., told the *Star* ... that the Ontario government's proposed Green Energy Act is a 'very strong' initiative that helps the province apart from other jurisdictions in North America."

Sometimes we never really know how progressive we've become until it's recognized internationally. I'd like my colleague to look at the international response to this Green Energy Act.

ENERGY RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: Ontarians want to do the right thing by the environment, but

times are very tough in this province and that's why we need environmental choices that are affordable. The McGuinty government's approach assumes that Ontarians have the spare cash to fund an energy audit and it assumes that people have thousands upon thousands of dollars to pay for retrofits with money that they simply don't have. Your reimbursement process is complicated and inaccessible to most Ontarians. Why, I want to ask the Premier, does this government make it so difficult for Ontarians to do the right thing by the environment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague may have a point. There are so many programs out there right now in combination with the federal government that I think we need to find a way to make it easier for homeowners in particular to find their way through these and come up with a simpler approach to helping them.

But here's the good news. You can earn up to \$10,000 in savings and in refunds, both from the province of Ontario and the federal government, if you choose to pursue an energy audit and renovate your home. I think that's an important financial contribution being made by Canadian taxpayers and Ontario taxpayers to incent Ontario families into pursuing energy conservation policies.

I will agree that we can and should do something to make the process simpler, but I disagree that we're not doing a lot when it comes to helping Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Most low-income people actually live in apartments. Forty per cent of tenants face unaffordable rents in the province, yet this government's deluded approach to environmental issues is penalizing these cash-strapped tenants. Smart metering is going to cost tenants a lot more, and you know that landlords in fact are going to pass on any increased electricity costs associated with the Green Energy Act.

Before tenants get unfairly whacked or forced out of their houses altogether, why won't the McGuinty government implement a permanent rate assistance program for vulnerable tenants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we were talking originally about some environmental initiatives and costs which might be borne by tenants. One of the things that we're proud to participate in, together with the federal government, is a program valued at over \$700 million, if my memory serves me correctly, to retrofit existing social housing to help get those costs down. I think that's an important step. There's always more to be done.

We're proud of the record that we also have when it comes to dealing with rents and, in fact, how little they've gone up relative to cost of living in so many other different areas.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I was hoping the Premier would commit to helping those vulnerable tenants who are going to be hit hard and can't afford the cost increases.

There's no doubt that we do need to green Ontario's energy supply—I think all of us would agree to that—and

we need to promote conservation in this province absolutely. But we need to make sure that everyone, from individuals to businesses, can afford to participate in a greener society.

Struggling resource industries cannot afford to shoulder an unfair burden. That's why we need an industrial hydro rate in this province. Yet the government's Green Energy Act doesn't even mention that kind of a policy. What will you do to ensure that the Green Energy Act doesn't put Ontario companies further at risk?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A couple of things on that score: First of all, in our recent budget, we once again extended the electricity rate support for business in the province of Ontario, particularly assistance for those in the forestry sector, for example. As well, the purpose of the Green Energy Act is to help us not only generate new electricity from renewable sources but, at the same time, to aggressively pursue energy conservation opportunities.

We want to work well and hard with Ontario businesses to help them find savings. That's what conservation is all about. We have a number of programs in place to help incent the kinds of investments that will produce those savings which help make those businesses more competitive, so that they have more profit, so that they can hire more Ontarians.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a question to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, as you know, the Green Energy Act is before committee right now. Can you tell us how the Green Energy Act, with all its proposals to have a smaller carbon footprint, is so important given that today is Earth Day, and how this Green Energy Act will promote the important initiatives you have in your own ministry combined with the initiatives of the Green Energy Act?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, to everyone in this Legislature, happy Earth Day. Today is Earth Day.

I can tell you that one of the main advantages of the Green Energy Act is to make sure that we have renewable energy in the province of Ontario rather than the fossil-fuel-driven energy that we have right now. As you know, we have a commitment. We have legislated that we will be getting out of the coal-fired-energy plants by 2014. In order to do that, we simply have to create more renewable energy, whether we're talking about wind power or solar power, biogas and biomass. I can tell you that we, within the Ministry of the Environment, are working very closely with the Minister of Energy to make sure that we have the safeguards in place, that when these energy projects get approved, the health standards that we're accustomed to and the environmental standards that are so important to the people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1050

Mr. Mike Colle: Today also, on Earth Day, we have the beginning of the pesticide ban in Ontario. For the first

time in this province the sale of these harmful chemicals will be banned and they won't be able to sell all these chemicals that stay in our groundwater, stay in our front yards and our backyards for generations. Can you tell us how this pesticide ban is going to complement the good things that you're doing in your ministry to make sure we have clean water and clean air?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I had the opportunity within the last hour to announce at Allan Gardens right here in the city of Toronto that the cosmetic use of pesticides in the province of Ontario is going to be banned on our lawns, gardens, backyards and front yards as of today. The list of banned substances includes about 250 substances and 80 different ingredients. The main ingredient for doing all of this is to make sure that we take unnecessary risks away from our children. Our children are unnecessarily exposed right now by the pesticide materials that are used in their lawns and gardens. I'm very pleased that this is the strongest law that we have in all of North America. It supersedes any municipal bylaw because it not only deals with the use of cosmetic pesticides, but also it bans the sale of cosmetic pesticides. This is a day that Ontarians can be extremely—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier: We hear this morning of more problems at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming office. This time it's botched tickets. It seems there's scarcely a week that goes by without another embarrassing botch-up at that office. You've clearly put high-priced people in charge who can only shoot craps. When will you take charge and clean up this operation so Ontarians can have confidence in it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I want to acknowledge that there was an error. My understanding is that there was a computer error. The good news is that it was acknowledged immediately, it was made public and it was addressed. I'm not sure what more we might ask of OLG in these circumstances. I'm not sure how many tickets they sell on a daily basis. I believe it's in the tens of thousands. I think there were some 80 or 90 tickets that did not have the appropriate date on them. That was noticed, as I said. It was dealt with. I think they dealt with it in an honest and forthright and efficient manner. I think that's all we can ask of the OLG in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Why doesn't the Premier just wave a white flag?

Three weeks ago, I called the Premier's attention to the dismaying irony of staff at OLG receiving significant salary increases and bonuses in the wake of misstep after misstep and embarrassment after embarrassment, and in the midst of a recession. Now, with yet another of these never-ending goofs, I ask you again, why are you sitting

idly by letting this error-prone, mismanaged agency hand out bonuses to officials? When will you show us you understand and take action?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, just so we can deal with the facts, because I think they're pretty important, on Monday, between 2 o'clock and 5 o'clock, a computer mistake caused the wrong date to be printed on 92 of the tickets sold on Monday. By the way, on that day, 563,639 tickets were sold, and there was a mistake on 92 of them. That was acknowledged. They have been made null and void. They will be replaced or refunded. Again, I think that's the appropriate thing to do under the circumstances.

There have been significant changes made with respect to the executive at the OLG. I think they're moving in the right direction, and I think it's symbolic of that when they acknowledge this publicly and move efficiently to rectify the situation.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Premier, you say you're committed to the environment, to green energy, but you systematically give preference to nuclear energy over green energy.

Look at the Green Energy Act. Under that bill, government won't cover cost overruns for renewable energy, but you remain willing to cover cost overruns for dirty nuclear energy. Under the Green Energy Act, the government won't commit to purchasing set amounts of energy from renewable energy suppliers, but you're willing to buy nuclear power even at times when we don't need the energy and we have to pay consumers to take it.

Why do you give nuclear energy suppliers a sweetheart deal? Why are you willing to give them a sweetheart deal that you refuse to offer to cleaner and safer sources of power?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my colleague is going to want to acknowledge that Ontario's Green Energy Act is the most progressive and aggressive of its kind in North America. The only other jurisdiction that is in the same league, I would argue, would be Germany.

I think my friend also needs to be honest about his perspective on these matters. He believes that we should get rid of nuclear generation in the province of Ontario. Fifty per cent of our electricity comes from nuclear generation. It's not generating carbon emissions for us, and it is that going for it. There have been some cost issues in the past; there are some downsides associated with nuclear waste. But we have to make some difficult choices. We have chosen to move away from coal-fired generation. We intend to maintain the base that we have of nuclear generation in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't generally get to say I appreciate an answer, but I now understand the full depth of this commitment to nuclear and want to make sure that anyone who is interested in green power in this province knows where the money and the commitment are.

Premier, going back, in May 2006 you made it very clear that you wouldn't accept a system in which the people of Ontario, the ratepayers and the taxpayers, got stuck with cost overruns for nuclear power. You made that very clear. Nuclear is not affordable. You know that cost estimates are increasing. In the United States, companies that have been building nuclear power plants have run into big cost overruns; the same in Finland. Will you repeat the commitment you made in May 2006 to not accept cost overruns on new nuclear power plants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're going to do everything that we possibly can to manage the costs on behalf of Ontario ratepayers when it comes to nuclear generation. That's one side of it, and we're doing much there, but there are other sides as well. It's a multifaceted and, I would argue, responsible approach for dealing with electricity needs in the province of Ontario.

We've got a very aggressive plan when it comes to promoting energy conservation. We've got the most aggressive act of its kind in North America when it comes to harnessing energy from renewables. We're the first government to have in place a 20-year plan to meet our electricity needs.

At this point in time, it is very obvious to us that nuclear remains an important part of our base load capacity. We intend to do nothing more than maintain that base load so that we can continue to power our hospitals, our schools and our economy.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion as we celebrate Ontario Coaches Week. Whether it's Little League soccer or training for the Olympics, coaches do more than teach sport. They harness an individual's raw talent and determination and they develop them into athletes. Coaches also help to develop self-esteem and confidence that our children will use throughout their lives. Any successful athlete will tell you that their coaches have played an important role in their career. The executive director of the Coaches Association of Ontario put it best when she said, "Great coaches are individuals who are passionate about their athletes' development on and off the field."

What is the government doing to help organizations like the Coaches Association of Ontario so that they can continue to support the athletes in our communities?

1100

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to thank the member from Mississauga South for that question. I also want to take this opportunity, again, to welcome all the coaches who are here today.

It is my privilege, on behalf of everyone at the Ministry of Health Promotion, to recognize and commend our coaches for their hard work, dedication and their constant inspiration. Their commitment inspires us continuously throughout the year. From Little League to the Olympics, coaches give of themselves to our athletes, our children, our communities and our future.

Our government continues to support our coaches and athletes through programs such as Sport for More, Own the Podium, Quest for Gold and the national coaching certification program. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested over—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Staying active is important to our health. In my riding of Mississauga South, we are fortunate to have organizations like Walk and Bike for Life who work to promote healthy living. Tonight, in recognition of Earth Day, I thank the minister for coming to join our community in support of this initiative.

Coaches also play a very important role in increasing sport participation and physical activity across Ontario. Coaches are at the heart of every sport and are bound by one common thread: the desire to help individuals be the best they can be. The programs mentioned by the Minister of Health Promotion will benefit coaches, athletes and our communities. However, we must also recognize the importance of providing community sports and recreation infrastructure.

Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that the sport community is receiving appropriate support and what is the government doing to ensure that our coaches and athletes are competitive outside of Ontario?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I look forward to joining the member from Mississauga South this evening as we continue our health promotion initiatives.

We certainly value our partnerships with the Coaches Association of Ontario, provincial sport organizations, sport administrators, officials and volunteers across Ontario. We have invested approximately \$32 million in grants to over 1,000 community organizations to help Ontarians lead healthy, active lives.

Excellent sporting facilities are fundamental for coaches to train and develop athletes. The McGuinty government is committed to helping to keep Ontarians healthy. We have invested a total of \$193 million in 99 sport and recreation infrastructure-related projects.

Bringing the Pan-American/Parapan Games to Ontario would leave a legacy of new and improved sport facilities and recreation facilities across Ontario. I again thank our coaches for all the hard work that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Premier. Your budget recognizes the work done by your Expert Commission on Pensions, which produced a comprehensive report in November of last year. It recognizes the problem with the pension benefits guarantee fund and makes several recommendations. On page 124, it states that the fund “should not receive government grants or subsidies in order to meet its obligations.” Why, then, are you seeking in Bill 162, the budget bill which you’ve moved closure on, the power to

grant the fund money in direct contradiction with your commission’s recommendations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I’m not an expert on pension matters and I’m not sure there are that many people in Ontario who in fact understand the full picture, but I’ll take a stab at this question.

My understanding is that what we’re doing through the budget bill is making it clear that we have no legal obligation to make contributions to the pension benefits guarantee fund, but we reserve the right to make that kind of a contribution should we feel that’s appropriate in the circumstances and serves the public interest.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Under the present legislation, Premier, you already have the power to lend money to the fund, which would be paid back by those who benefit from the insurance of that fund.

Seventy per cent of Ontarians are not lucky enough to have a pension, yet you are asking them to give you the right to write a cheque on their behalf for 70% of that grant to help out those who already have the protection of a pension. If you are going to do that, Premier, for those who have a pension, what are you going to do for the rest of the people who have lost 30% to 50% of their RRSPs and their retirement income? What are you going to do for the people who are going to write that cheque?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is on to a very important issue here. First of all, I want to assure him that we are preserving for ourselves and any subsequent government the right to make that investment in that pension benefit guarantee fund, should they deem it to be appropriate and, as I said, it serves the public interest. But I think it’s also important to keep in mind a point that my colleague raises. I think the number is actually 65% of Ontarians who don’t have a pension. They have quietly presided over the depletion to the tune of 30% to 40% of whatever savings they may have put away. I think it speaks to a broader issue and I would encourage the Prime Minister to host a national summit. The Premiers have had the chance to talk about this in a preliminary way, but I think it’s the kind of thing that affects all Canadians. The fact is, the overwhelming majority of Canadians don’t have access to an adequate level of pension retirement funds.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Peter Kormos: My question is to the Premier. The problem is that the latest bungle at the OLG isn’t an isolated incident. It’s part of a pattern. A \$6-billion-a-year organization and the pattern of bungling is mind boggling: bad winning scratch tickets, giveaways of European cars, faulty slot machines, expensive lawsuits against rightful winners, promotional T-shirts made in Mexico. It’s not enough to say, “Oh, I think they’re doing their best.” The public of Ontario deserves to have confidence in the OLG. Why won’t this Premier take positive steps to ensure that this happens?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's important not to lose track of what in fact happened here. There were, on the day in question—Monday—563,639 tickets sold. Ninety-two of those tickets had the wrong date printed on them. Those were declared to be null and void and they're going to be replaced or refunded. The OLG has pinpointed the full list of tickets in cities where the affected tickets were sold. This information is available in affected at retail locations, on the website or by calling the Customer Excellence Centre.

I think they've done what is appropriate in the circumstances. I think they have done what Ontarians expect of them in these circumstances. I think they were honest, they were forthcoming, they acknowledged, they made it public and they've taken the steps to fix it. That is what they are supposed to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: What happened was yet another stunning screw-up in an organization with some of the highest-priced help in the province of Ontario. Good grief. People have more confidence betting with Tony Soprano and he's not even real.

Three things are certain now in this Premier's Ontario: death, tax grabs and more screw-ups at the OLG. Maybe the minister responsible has a little bit too much on his plate and it's time for a minister who can handle the OLG and its fallouts and ensure that confidence is once again restored in gaming in Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's no doubt about it, there's always some political fun to be had in dealing with the OLG, given their record, which is less than stellar, I would acknowledge to my colleague. But are we going to hang them for 92 misprints on a day when they sold 563,639 tickets? I think not. I mean, that's just the way I see it. They've acknowledged it, they've taken steps to remedy that, and I think they've done the appropriate thing under the circumstances.

We have made some real changes when it comes to the executive there. We have been working really hard together to help bring about the kinds of changes that demonstrate a higher level of respect for Ontario consumers. I think we're making some real progress.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Health. Earlier this week, the minister kicked off the national Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. Giving the gift of life is more important now than ever before. In fact, the demand for organ transplantation continues to be a major concern for Ontarians. Currently, there are about 1,700 patients waiting for an organ transplant in this province. Organ donation in Ontario and in Canada has not kept pace with the need for organs. I would ask the Minister of Health, what is he doing to improve organ donation rates in the province of Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm glad that my colleague from Essex asked this question because it gives me a chance to

reaffirm our government's commitment to increasing organ donation in the province of Ontario. We're committed to working with our partners, the Trillium Gift of Life Network, to ensure that we increase life-saving transplants. We want to make sure that the patients who need a transplant can get one as soon as possible.

The other day, I was on hand to announce a program that will help youth better understand and get excited about organ donation. RecycleMe.org is an interactive, engaging, compelling campaign that will get youth talking, texting and Twittering about organ donation. This campaign is an important step toward creating greater awareness and increasing donor rates.

I know it will get youth talking about organ donation, because this program was developed by a youth panel at the Trillium Gift of Life Network. I want to acknowledge Mr. Frank Markel and Rabbi Reuven Bulka and the work that they have done—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The hard reality is that every three days someone dies in Ontario waiting for an organ transplant. Organ transplantation can be challenging for both the donor and the recipient. For those on the waiting list, there may be a substantial financial burden to bear when relocating closer to a transplant hospital. The costs associated with becoming a living donor can be prohibitive. As well, there could be income loss or travel expenses.

Will the Minister of Health tell this House how this government intends to help recipients and living donors?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to tell my honourable colleague about initiatives in place to help organ recipients and donors. Often, patients who need a transplant have to relocate to near a hospital in case an organ becomes available. That's why, beginning May 1, we're launching a new program that will provide some financial help to patients waiting for heart, lung and heart-lung transplantation who must relocate to be near a hospital site. We will administer this program with our partners at Trillium Gift of Life Network.

We will also be supporting living donors by reimbursing them for expenses associated with their organ donation, such as travel, accommodation and loss of income after surgery. So far, TGLN has processed 147 applications between April and December 2008. These are important steps. They will make it easier for living donors and recipients to give—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education. We all know that priorities are the things you set when you want to make a cohesive plan that creates real results. I'd be happy to help create those priorities for you, because I find that, time and time again, some of those priorities are lacking, because I don't see a plan.

Let me be clear that 30% of Ontario students have IEPs, individual education plans, that clearly spell out the need for those children to receive specialized attention to succeed. The majority of these students either do not have an educational assistant or receive a fraction of the support they require just to keep up with their classmates.

Minister, can you tell these students and their parents why you've chosen to invest in light bulbs and infrastructure instead of in them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would be happy to address this issue. The reality is that we're investing across the spectrum of needs in the publicly funded education system. I think to draw a false dichotomy between investing in special education, which we've done—special education is projected to increase by \$49 million, \$627 million since 2002-03. We've made massive investments in special education. Not only have we done that, we're transforming the way special education is delivered. Parents of children with autism are seeing a better continuum of service and better transitions. But to suggest that because we're doing that, and we need to do more of that, we shouldn't be investing in sustainable buildings and retrofitting for energy savings is completely irresponsible—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm hearing from parents who have had to resort to tutors to help their children because they aren't getting the help in the classes.

You have made a lot of announcements and a lot of promises, but the fact is that you haven't met the mark. I find it ironic that you've promised \$550 million to save and protect our rural schools, yet Beeton's Tecumseth North Elementary School in my colleague's riding of Simcoe-Grey will be shutting their doors, as will many other rural schools in Ontario. I wonder if your apathy for rural schools has caused you to divert \$550 million for rural schools into this new light bulb program?

Our rural schools are the cornerstone of our rural communities, and you have abandoned them. Minister, will you reprioritize these resources and reinvest in the children of our rural communities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite actually knows that in this province we are investing in publicly funded education to an extent that the province hasn't seen, certainly, in a number of decades.

What we know is that there are 90,000 fewer students in our schools today than there were in 2002-03. It is absolutely imperative that school boards have the opportunity to develop capital plans and make decisions that are best for their community.

We have a school foundation grant, we have supportive schools grants—there are millions of dollars that have gone in to support those rural schools against the ravages of declining enrolment.

Having said all of that, the test for us is, are students in our schools getting the standards of education that they need? Are they getting teachers who have the professional development that they need? Are they receiving the resources that they need? That's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Premier, New Democrats are outraged that this government is shutting down the debate on its budget by allowing only one day for public hearings on a matter of such critical importance. The Premier is ending debate on a budget bill that contains far-reaching provisions about the security of the retirement incomes of millions of Ontarians. The CAW workers I rallied with in Windsor this week are gravely concerned about their pensions.

Why is this government using the heavy hammer of time allocation to end debate on something as important as pension security?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've been working very closely with both the CAW and the auto companies, and there's a strong consensus on this particular point: The single most important thing that we can do to guarantee the health and vitality of those pension funds is to put the auto sector itself on a strong footing. So we're going to continue to find ways. We have come to the table with significant contributions, on behalf of Ontario taxpayers. This industry is too important for us to lose. We're prepared to do all that we can to put this industry on a strong footing. There are always limits, of course. There are competing demands. But we've been there from the outset, and we intend to continue to be there. Again, that is the single most important thing that we can do to protect those pensions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd be afraid if I were the government shredding the pension safety net. That's why they've made sure that there are as few people as possible allowed to speak in a public forum. We're talking about retirement monies, the deferred wages owed to loyal workers, workers who have given a lifetime to their employer.

Why is this government closing debate on this important issue? Is it afraid Ontarians will start asking questions about pension security? Is that the problem?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's a broader debate that we're going to have to engage in, I would argue, as a country. I think we see some of the competing views, and there's some validity to both of them. The member for the NDP says we've got to worry about people in the auto sector who have a defined benefit pension plan. A moment ago, my colleague Mr. Sterling said, "Well, what about the 65% of Ontarians who don't have access to any pensions? Are they going to be called upon to invest in those defined benefit pension plans?" That's the kind of thing that speaks to some very broad issues.

Back in 2006, we commissioned a report from Harry Arthurs. It's a very lengthy report. It's out for consultations, and we look forward to finding the best views from Ontarians on that particular score. Then we look forward to working with our colleagues from across the country to see what we might do to better support pen-

sioners and all Canadians who may not have a formal pension as well.

1120

MUNICIPALITIES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Ontario's major urban centres are growing rapidly. The issues of urban affairs are generating increasing interest and bringing greater attention to how cities work or how they struggle. There's no denying we're in for difficult times. The news media are full of commentary on these challenging economic times.

We all know that the global downturn is reaching right into our communities. In my community of Guelph, residents are worried about their jobs and providing a stable life for their families. They are asking for innovative government that utilizes resources available to them as best as they can.

In the minister's speech at the OGRA/ROMA conference in February, he touched on some of the innovative approaches Ontario municipalities are taking to address the needs of their communities. For the benefit of the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Jim Watson: Some of the most innovative and creative ideas to contain costs and increase efficiency in the public sector can be found at the local level. One of the great opportunities I have travelling this wonderful province is to attend various municipal conferences and visit municipalities and see first-hand some of these great innovative cost-containment ideas.

In the member's own community of Guelph they just opened a new city hall that brought together various city departments, reducing their costs. It's a very green facility. The heating and cooling system is using 38% less energy.

In Hamilton, Mayor Eisenberger has championed the Woodward Avenue water and waste water facility. It's expected that the project will generate 16.4 kilowatt hours of renewable electricity.

So as we celebrate Earth Day today, we can look to the municipal sector for some very creative and innovative green ideas to save money.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Those are some very interesting municipal initiatives. But as you know, Ontario municipalities can't go it alone. They need our help. They're doing their best in tough times and are asking us to do what we can to ease the burden they carry.

Infrastructure investments tend to improve quality of life and economic growth across Ontario. Investing in infrastructure creates jobs and provides needed repairs to public infrastructure. There is an ever-constant need for both new affordable housing and repairs to our existing stock. I hear regularly from Guelph constituents asking about making improvements to public transit.

One of the ways we can gain greater value from municipal governments is to provide them with a greater ability to respond. How is your ministry helping communities like Guelph respond to the needs of their communities?

Hon. Jim Watson: We've taken a more co-operative and consultative approach when it comes to dealing with municipalities. That really was highlighted when AMO, the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario signed the fiscal and service delivery review, which began the process of uploading costs back to the provincial level, things like Ontario Works, court security, the Ontario disability support program and the Ontario drug plan. We've also invested a record amount of money in infrastructure. The city of Guelph the honourable member represents so well received \$10.9 million in Investing in Ontario money. Guelph has also received \$2.5 million in gas tax money alone this year.

We've reversed the trend of downloading and we're back on the road to uploading to give the municipalities the resources and the tools they need to ensure that their property taxpayers are well served. I look forward to working with AMO, Guelph and other municipalities to continue this trend in the future.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Premier: Premier, your government is transferring title for the 378 acres of Ontario Realty Corp. land at the former Burtch Correctional Centre. The title is being transferred to the Haudenosaunee Six Nations. In May 2007, your government negotiators offered up Burtch as part of a \$125-million proposal to settle four outstanding Six Nations land disputes. My question: What did your government negotiate in return for handing over the 378 acres at Burtch?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I must say I'm not familiar with the details of this. I've just been handed a note; it's a rather extensive note. I could read from that, but I think as a courtesy to my colleague, what I can do is undertake to look into this appropriately and get back to him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Further to my question, the neighbours are concerned about the precedent that the transfer of this ORC land would set. For example, there are other Ontario Realty Corp. properties adjacent to Six Nations in the area. They've been brought up in the negotiations. Some of the properties were put under a development freeze for several years. For example: Sprucedale Correctional Centre; a former OPP office; a horticultural research farm—all near Simcoe—the Jarvis and Canfield MTO yards; the Cayuga courthouse; Rock Point Provincial Park; and Selkirk Provincial Park. There are 4,700 acres in South Cayuga and 1,400 acres in Townsend, all ORC property—not to mention Douglas Creek Estates, which you purchased, ORC land next to Caledonia that hosts a smoke shack.

The concern is, does the Burtch transfer set a precedent? Are these other Ontario Realty Corp. properties—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my colleague, I thank him for the question. I think he's laid it out in a fulsome way. I undertake to get him a fulsome answer as well.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Education: Your inadequate funding has created a funding lottery for school boards. If your school is the correct distance from a corporate donor and you're willing to paint your rooms in corporate colours, your school might win a \$50,000 corporate lab from Future Shop. Minister, what are you going to do for the schools who don't get any corporate lottery money?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The principle of what we've been doing for the last six years is that we have been putting money into the publicly funded education system so that schools across the province would have equitable access to resources. I think the reference the member opposite is making is to a deal that the Toronto District School Board has put in place. They're working with a corporation. They have their own policy about how that should be done.

Obviously, I'm very concerned that there be equitable access to resources. I'm also very concerned that publicly funded education remain publicly funded, which is why we've put more than \$5 billion into publicly funded education for exactly the kinds of resources that are the basics, that are needed by the kids in our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No corporation gives anything without strings attached, and that's attached to our children.

As a former school trustee and activist, do you not feel a twinge of embarrassment that your education system needs to be bailed out with corporate handouts? And since our schools are being sold to the highest bidder and can no longer count on equal resources, will the minister publish the size of the corporate bailout that each school has been able to secure on the school information-finder website so that parents will know what their school is getting and what price had to be paid by their children?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I reject the premise that our schools need to be bailed out. That's absolutely not the case. In fact, I've increased our monitoring of the fundraising. I'm very interested that we not have a two-tiered education system in this province and I'm paying very close attention to these kinds of arrangements.

Having said that, the member opposite, who is also a former trustee, knows perfectly well that there have been fundraising activities that have gone on in communities forever. That is part of what community building is. The fact is, the Toronto District School Board is making decisions about its assets, and we are monitoring that.

But I'm not going to, and I don't think it's reasonable to, expect that a government's going to intervene in every single fundraising activity that a school board does across this province. As I said, we're watching closely. We're monitoring the fundraising activities, particularly when they have to do with capital dollars. I absolutely understand—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, there is no doubt that more and more students are seeking a post-secondary education and are choosing Ontario schools to obtain it. In my community of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, enrolment at St. Lawrence College has seen the number of applicants surge over the past four years. In fact, I understand that post-secondary enrolment is up by 25% in Ontario since 2004, with 100,000 more students attending colleges and universities.

Although this is good news, there is no doubt that increased enrolment is putting additional pressures on our colleges and universities. We know that in these tough economic times, more people are returning to post-secondary education and choosing to remain in school longer. Minister, I would like to know what you are doing to ensure that colleges and universities have the means necessary to support this growth.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to assure the member that we're working very closely with our institutions to make sure they have both the capital and the operating support needed to welcome the new students into their midst. Through the infrastructure investments, for example, rolled out since 2007, institutions have expanded and built new buildings, classrooms and labs in order to support more students on their campuses. The honourable member mentioned St. Lawrence College, and I'm pleased to report that over the past 18 months they have received over \$1.2 million to help the college expand facilities in order to accommodate more learners.

I was also pleased that our most recent budget included an additional \$780 million in infrastructure for colleges and universities that will both update the institutions and create jobs in the short term.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: Minister, that's certainly good news, and it's good to know that the supports are there for the college. But with more students seeking a post-secondary education, demands on our universities and colleges are increasing. To me, it makes good sense that investments are made to the infrastructure of our schools in order to provide accessible and first-class education, but when I meet the school administrators and student groups, they tell me that more than just investments in infrastructure is needed to accommodate the growing number of students in their classrooms. They worry that operating funding will not keep pace with the increased enrolment.

Could the minister tell us what is being done to address the pressures caused by enrolment growth at St. Lawrence College and all other post-secondary institutions in the province?

Hon. John Milloy: The member is correct: This is about more than just bricks and mortar, and I'm very pleased that under the leadership of our Premier, the Ontario government has increased operating funding for colleges and universities by 63% since 2003—that's \$1.7 billion—while at the same time significantly increasing per-student funding. I'm also pleased to report that the most recent budget contained increased funding to our colleges and universities by over \$350 million for the upcoming academic year.

We're going to continue to make post-secondary education a priority in this province, and we're going to continue to work with our institutions to make sure that they have the resources they need to maintain their quality as some of the finest colleges and universities in the country, if not the world.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The mother of page Nicola Craig is here. I'd like to welcome Nicola's mother, Susan Craig, and I think one of the other family members, Helen Craig, is also here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. Pursuant to the order of the House yesterday, this is a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Colle, Mike
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton

Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziatti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim

Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob

McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil

Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia

Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 27.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House of yesterday, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir aujourd'hui de présenter un certain candidat pour l'Ordre de la Pléiade. Je vais commencer par Paul-André Gauthier, qui est un bon ami à moi, de Nickel Belt, qui va recevoir l'Ordre cet après-midi. Il est accompagné dans la galerie est de certains invités très spéciaux. Je commence avec son conjoint, Paul, et les personnes qui l'ont nommé, Edmonde et Jacques Brière. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I'm pleased to introduce Mrs. Shamim Rajan and Mr. Aman Rajan, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome, and welcome to your son, Bilaal, who's watching the proceedings downstairs right now.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome three guests of mine in the Speaker's gallery, from the fine riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London: Mike Streib, John Regan and Susan Gardner. Welcome to Queen's Park today. If any of you are ever in need of pheasant, Mike Streib's the man to talk to.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Ontario's recipients of the internationally recognized medal of la francophonie, l'Ordre de la Pléiade, for their outstanding contributions to French-speaking communities in the province: M^{me} Lillian Anne Gagné, M. Paul-André Gauthier, M. Jacques Janson, M. André Marcil, M^{me} Tonia Mori and M. Gilles Patry. Please join me in welcoming our honoured guests today, who will be recognized by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: "Let's get moving on our new hospital." That is what Wellington-Halton Hills residents are telling the Minister of Health.

On many occasions over the past six years, I have repeatedly expressed my community's reasonable expectation that the minister approve and fund a new Groves Memorial Community Hospital. There may be some reason for hope buried in the most recent provincial budget.

Page 99 of this year's budget papers document shows that infrastructure spending on hospitals is planned to go from \$1.7 billion last year to \$3.4 billion in two years. This means the government plans to double spending on hospital infrastructure leading up to the provincial election in 2011. With all that new money they're planning for hospital construction, surely our community deserves its fair share. Surely we have the right to expect a brand new hospital serving patients very soon.

Last summer, the Ministry of Health instructed the Groves Memorial staff to commence discussions with the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network. This latest roadblock prevents us from moving forward to the next stage of planning. I've asked the LHIN for a progress report on these discussions, which have been ongoing now for some eight months. I'm looking forward to receiving it.

Surely the time has come not only to place Groves on the ministry's five-year plan, but also for a firm timeline on construction. We need to know when the shovels will be in the ground and we need to know when our new hospital will be serving our community.

RICHARD PATTEN

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's my pleasure today to bring an update about a former member of this Legislature, Richard Patten, my predecessor and former MPP from Ottawa Centre.

Richard continues to do good community work in the city of Ottawa. A few weeks ago, Mr. Patten launched the Richard Patten Aboriginal Bursary at Algonquin College, where he presented the college with a cheque for \$76,400.

Last year, after Richard's retirement from public office, a tribute was held to celebrate his service to the province and the city of Ottawa. The tribute raised \$38,000, which is matched by the province for scholarships and bursaries. Beginning in the 2009-10 academic year, the bursary will be distributed to eligible aboriginal students studying in full-time programs at Algonquin College.

As many of you know, before entering into public life Richard served as the president for the Canadian Council

for International Co-operation. He was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1987, where he served as Minister of Government Services and later as Minister of Correctional Services in the Peterson government. Though defeated in 1990, he was re-elected in the 1995 election and remained the MPP for Ottawa Centre until his retirement in 2007.

The bursary will provide much-needed help to aboriginal students. Richard plans to raise funds every two years to assist even more aboriginal students.

Thank you, Richard, for your continued community service in the city of Ottawa.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Volunteering is a fundamental act of citizenship in our province. As more and more people become involved in volunteering, our communities continue to grow and prosper. By caring and contributing to change, volunteers are changing lives while enhancing their own. Every day, thousands of volunteers donate their time and energy without any expectation of a monetary reward. Thousands of Ontarians benefit from the selfless acts of volunteers. This week, during National Volunteer Week, we celebrate all of the hard work put forth by Ontario's volunteers.

Today, I will be introducing into the House my private member's bill, the Criminal Record Checks for Volunteers Act, 2009. Many volunteer organizations, particularly those dealing with children, require their volunteers to submit a criminal record check. In many cases, volunteers have to pay out of their own pocket for a criminal record check or the organization has to fundraise to underwrite the cost of the criminal record check. The goal of my bill would allow volunteers to pay for their criminal record check once per year, yet still access the record to distribute to multiple volunteer organizations at no additional cost to the volunteer or the organization. This cost-saving initiative will encourage more volunteers to donate their time to multiple causes.

Volunteerism is an important sector, and without them in our schools, hospitals and community groups, our communities would suffer.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: Within a few hours after the budget was released in this House, the phone started to ring in my constituency office, and it was not the usual people who call me. For the first time, people from real estate agents and brokerage houses were calling and were very concerned. We agreed to meet with them, and I was quite surprised to have a dialogue. I was quite surprised, in hosting an afternoon meeting last Friday, that 24 real estate agents and brokers showed up from the Beaches-East York area to talk about the new tax. What they had to say needs to be heard by this government.

They said that the key message that they had was that the harmonized sales tax is going to hurt both real estate

agents and brokerage houses across the province. The effect on new home buyers is not just on those who are going to be buying homes above \$500,000, but that the majority of such homes are in the GTA, and the majority of homes between \$400,000 and \$500,000 are also in the GTA. They honestly believe that less and less people are going to be buying those homes. They also reiterated that commercial property will now be taxable for the first time, a product that they sell, and that legal fees, appraisals, commissions, home inspections and moving costs are all going to weigh on new homes and reduce the number of homes that are sold in the Toronto area.

They asked that I raise this issue in the House and I promised to do so, but they also implore the government to please listen to what they have to say. When they come forward for the one day of hearings, please make sure they're included.

ST. PETER PLAYERS

Mr. Phil McNeely: I rise in the Legislature today to recognize the St. Peter Players from the St. Peter's Catholic High School in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans. The St. Peter Players is an extracurricular theatre company and gives senior students at the high school the opportunity to participate in the educative experience of professional theatre performance. Some of their past productions include *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story*, *Les Misérables*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Grease*.

This past March, the company performed an outstanding rendition of *Beauty and the Beast* that was well-regarded across the Orléans community. My high acclaim goes out to the cast members: Lydia Barrett, who played Belle; Charles Douglas, who played the Beast; Austrian exchange student Robin Jentyts as Lumière; Michael Heney as Cogsworth; Amber Forgie as Babette; Kyle Aubrecht-Kerr as Gaston; Sarah MacDonald as the Wardrobe; Sarah Algozino, Eric Kavcic, Ryan Binsell, Alanna Bale, Sean Payton-Stewart, Jessyca Lalumiere, Denise St. Pierre and Siobhan Kelly.

My congratulations to St. Peter Players director Bernie Léger and to high school principal Sue Arbour for another fantastic production.

1510

EDUCATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to ask the Minister of Education to correct the record from Monday's question period about school ratings. She stated: "What we wanted to do with the school information finder was to contextualize that information, to give families and the community more information so that they can assess what's happening."

Well, I don't know how the minister expects families to contextualize that information when the wonderful website is not giving them the full picture. If I were a family from Sturgeon Falls, I would think, based on the

inaccuracy of the website, that there were no schools available for my children to attend—no schools.

The good people of Sturgeon Falls must be very upset with the minister, as there are several schools in the area. There is École Écho-Jeunesse, École séparée La Résurrection, and École séparée Saint-Joseph, and they are not on the website. This error just reinforces the fact that this website has not been through the paces before going live across Ontario.

The minister should convene the education stakeholders to determine what really should be done on the website, where the errors are—and fix them.

There are factual errors, and before taking potshots at the accuracy of the Fraser Institute's report, may I suggest that you patch the crack in the glass house first.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr. David Oraziatti: I rise in the House today to recognize an important investment our government is making in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. Our government is investing \$109,000 to support five young entrepreneurs. The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation's young entrepreneur program provides up to \$25,000 to northern residents aged 18 to 29 to start their own for-profit business in the north. Since 2005, NOHFC has invested nearly \$5.2 million to help launch the businesses of more than 230 young entrepreneurs in the north.

While we have made considerable progress supporting our community's youth over the past few years, it is investments like these that not only benefit our community now, but for years to come. We are helping young and talented future leaders of our community develop business skills that will see them into the future while contributing innovative ideas to the business community.

NOHFC's young entrepreneur program is helping to launch new businesses such as X-Fi Design, a web design business; Graystone Environmental; the Algoma Natural Healing Clinic; Perrity Technical Services, a computer and network business; and Laliberté Programming Consultant, a computer programming service.

Small businesses play a vital role in our economy, and we understand the importance of investing in our youth so that they can contribute to strengthening Ontario.

I see many talented youth in my riding, and I am proud of the investments we are making to ensure that they have the tools they need to get started, build their skills and reach their goals.

BILAL RAJAN

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to speak about a remarkable young man from my riding of Richmond Hill, Bilal Rajan, who has recently established a very special event to celebrate National Volunteer Week, taking place April 19 to 25.

Bilal is an author, fundraiser, children's rights activist, UNICEF Canada ambassador, and was a page for this Legislature last year, who has been leading an in-

initiative in which he is living life without shoes for this entire week. Bilaal has engaged in this initiative to raise awareness of underprivileged children worldwide, many of whom cannot afford shoes. He is calling on all others, of all ages, to do the same for at least a few hours this week.

Bilaal's barefoot challenge is expected to be one of the largest celebrations of volunteerism in North America. The idea is growing fast and has encouraged people to participate in other countries as well.

In Bilaal's own words, "This ... initiative is a call to action. And when people ask me why I don't have shoes, I'll tell them because millions of children throughout the world don't either."

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Bilaal Rajan on his remarkable effort.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Ontarians read every day about the impacts of the global financial crisis. We in the McGuinty government have responded with both immediate and long-term initiatives to rebuild our economy and improve the lives of all Ontarians. The bold investments in Ontario's infrastructure and its citizens will create and sustain the jobs of today and allow Ontarians to compete for the jobs of the future. We know that these investments will build stronger people, families and communities.

This strength will be restored through investing \$32.5 billion over the next two years in infrastructure projects. These investments will support 300,000 jobs and improve our province's schools, hospitals, public institutions and roads. We are providing more than \$750 million for job creation and skills training. This will enhance the apprenticeship training tax credit, making it the most generous in Canada. And we are doubling the Ontario child benefit from \$600 to \$1,100 on July 1, 2009, nearly two years ahead of schedule. This increase will make families stronger and give every child an opportunity to succeed.

These investments underscore our government's commitment to Ontario families, and together we'll continue to work hard to help them through this uncertainty and to build a strong economy and strong communities for all Ontarians.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr21, An Act to revive 1173931 Ontario Limited.
Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Welechenko Transport Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS FOR VOLUNTEERS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES VÉRIFICATIONS DU CASIER JUDICIAIRE DES BÉNÉVOLES

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers / Projet de loi 170, Loi concernant les vérifications du casier judiciaire des bénévoles.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for a short statement.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Most volunteer organizations, particularly those dealing with children, require their volunteers to submit a criminal record check. In many cases, volunteers have to pay out of their own pocket for a criminal record check or the organization fundraises to underwrite the cost of the cheque.

The goal of this bill would be to create a system whereby volunteers pay for their criminal record check once per year, yet can access this record to distribute to multiple volunteer organizations at no additional cost to the volunteer. This cost-saving initiative would encourage more volunteers to donate their time to multiple causes.

Volunteerism is an important sector, and without volunteers in our schools, hospitals and community groups, our communities would suffer.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to introduce a motion without notice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr. John O'Toole: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item number 14. So moved.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Shurman assumes ballot item number 16 and Mr. Hillier assumes ballot item number 59.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Hon. Brad Duguid: I rise today to speak about Jordan's Principle, but before I begin I want to take a moment to acknowledge some very important guests that are here with us today, people who have worked very hard to ensure that this day was possible and people who have lent their support to this very important initiative. I hope I have them all because there are a number of guests here.

We have with us Grand Chief Stan Beardy from NAN; Grand Chief Timothy Thompson, Mohawks of Akwesasne; Chief Donald Maracle from Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte; and Chief Arthur Moore, Constance Lake First Nation. We have a number of representatives from Chiefs of Ontario; I thank them for coming. There are representatives from the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies. We have Sylvia Maracle, somebody who is known to all of us, executive director, and Sheila McMahon, president of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. We have, from the Ontario Native Women's Association, Dawn Harvard, and her beautiful daughter Briana is here with us. Marianne Borg, I believe, is here as well. And we have some representatives from the government of Canada. I thank them all for joining us here today and I thank them for their hard work in this area.

I would like also to acknowledge that I'm speaking on behalf of the government of Ontario here today and many of my respected colleagues. I would like to thank the Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services; the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services; and the Honourable David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, for their support and assistance with this important initiative; and my parliamentary assistant, Jeff Leal, as well for his help.

Jordan Anderson, for whom this principle is named, was born on a northern Manitoba reserve in 1999 with a complex disorder requiring special care. When Jordan died at age four, he'd spent his entire life in a hospital far from his family's community because the province of Manitoba and the government of Canada argued over who should pay for his care. In a nation as wealthy as Canada, no child should experience what young Jordan Anderson did, nor should any family in Canada be

presented with such heart-wrenching choices as the Andersons were.

The McGuinty government believes that today's children are tomorrow's leaders, which is why this government invests heavily in the health, safety and well-being of all Ontario children. We are a leader in providing seamless services for children. In Ontario we take an inclusive approach, putting patient care ahead of jurisdictional issues, and apply this principle when children like Jordan need help. This government believes that children's health, safety and well-being must always take precedence over matters of jurisdiction. That's important. It's time that we specifically acknowledge that a child-first policy is the only appropriate way to manage complex care cases in Canada.

Jordan's principle puts the needs of children first and supports the notion that needed health care should not be delayed or disrupted because of jurisdictional disputes. Ontario fully supports Jordan's Principle and pledges to work with First Nations and the federal government to ensure Jordan's Principle is honoured and applied in the province of Ontario. Providing aboriginal children with the opportunity to reach their full potential is one of the reasons that the McGuinty government created the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Ontario's Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

Ontario, in partnership with First Nations, Metis and Inuit, is working hard to improve the quality of life for aboriginal peoples. We invest about \$600 million annually on programs and services for aboriginal people; about \$300 million of this essential funding goes to aboriginal child and social services. We invest in the Aboriginal Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, which is designed to help all aboriginal children in Ontario get the best start in life. We also contribute funding to the aboriginal health access centres, through the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy, known as AHWS, which funds more than 460 health, healing and anti-violence programs in aboriginal communities both on and off reserve, improving the lives and health of people and communities.

Today I am affirming this government's commitment to Jordan's Principle, a commitment by the government of Ontario to ensure it is honoured and applied in this province. This government promises to work with First Nation families, communities and the federal government to make certain that jurisdictional disputes do not prevent the timely provision of health and social services for First Nation children in Ontario.

While Jordan's Principle is about equal treatment by governments, the spirit of this principle should be understood and considered by all public servants in all ministries in every government in this country.

I'm committed to working with my colleagues in other ministries to ensure equal treatment and access across all the programs and services we provide, with the full participation and involvement of our First Nation, Metis and Inuit partners. Aboriginal children and youth should have access to the same quality of services that all

Ontarians receive. They should have access to the same opportunities and choices available to each and every one of us.

Before I close, I'd like to acknowledge and thank many of the people who supported and stood behind Jordan and his family. Because of their efforts, much will be accomplished. Jordan Anderson will be forever remembered and honoured. Future complex care cases of First Nation children will be treated with the compassion and dignity they deserve, and Ontario will ensure that aboriginal children will not have needed care delayed as a result of jurisdictional disputes.

EARTH DAY

Hon. John Gerretsen: I think it's very appropriate to have with us today the aboriginal leadership, when we talk about Earth Day, because quite frankly, the aboriginal community can teach all of us an awful lot about their notion and concept of stewardship of our environment.

Today marks the 39th anniversary of Earth Day. Ever since 1970, this day has inspired people all around the world to pay attention to our environment and to celebrate our planet earth. Earth Day's significance grows with each passing year. Whether we look for ways to reduce our carbon footprint at home or at work, plant a tree or pitch in on a neighbourhood cleanup, it makes us more aware of why we need to cherish our earth, not just on April 22, but every day.

Interest in and rising concern about the environmental challenges facing our planet are stirring action and a demand for change on many different levels. Taking care of our earth is a serious responsibility, one we can all share. Our government has made protecting the environment a key priority. We have been taking action on climate change with ambitious yet realistic targets to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We've been backing those targets with unprecedented investments in transit and with strong actions to support renewable energy and conservation through our proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act.

We have introduced a number of new waste diversion programs to deal with municipal, hazardous and special waste; electronic and electrical equipment waste; and just recently, a program with respect to used tires. Together in this House, we passed the Lake Simcoe Protection Act to create a gold standard for sustainability in protecting the lake and its watershed, and are currently working on the plan that the enabling legislation calls and allows for, and we recently introduced legislation to reduce toxic substances in our environment.

As you know, our pesticides ban comes into effect today, on Earth Day. Ontario now has one of the toughest cosmetic pesticide bans in the world, and I want to thank the many people and health organizations who have supported the ban. Among them are the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, Cancer Care Ontario and Pesticide Free

Ontario, to name just a few. They know that by reducing the use of pesticides around our homes and yards and in our parks and playgrounds, we can reduce unnecessary risk to our health and to the environment, and protect the most vulnerable of our citizens, our children.

Earlier today, I had the great pleasure of joining a number of our partners from Communities in Bloom at Toronto's Allan Gardens. Communities in Bloom, with the help of master gardeners and horticulturalists, is helping to teach Ontarians how to go pesticide free and still enjoy healthy and green lawns and gardens.

We know that people need not only information, but are also looking for green alternatives. They are looking for new green products and services so that they can help to do their part for our environment and for themselves, so we're also investing in research and innovation. Our investment of \$480,000, which was announced today, will help establish the cosmetic use pesticides research and innovation program, a partnership with the Agricultural Adaptation Council which will fund projects that encourage the development of biopesticides and support the growth of green industries and green landscape gardening.

1530

Everything we do and all the choices we make—how we live, how we eat, how we get to work, and what we buy—will make a real difference to the kind of future our children and their grandchildren will enjoy. Clean air, healthy land and safe water are a true and valuable legacy that we can pass on to the next generation and the generations to come.

On Earth Day, and every day, let's all do what we can to support Ontarians in taking those important steps to protect our environment and make our great province stronger, cleaner and better for everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by the ministries? Responses?

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: Let me, first of all, start out by welcoming our visitors here today. I had a chance to go over and introduce myself to most of them. I've met Grand Chief Stan Beardy on many occasions. I understand he is to become an honorary Mohawk for today.

Let me just say that the statement by the minister today on Jordan's Principle, which basically says the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration, is certainly something that the opposition would support.

Jordan's Principle came about from the situation where Jordan Anderson, who was from Norway House Cree Nation, a northern First Nation, ended up spending his whole life in hospital while the Manitoba government and the federal government fought over who had to pay for what. I would just like to say that's certainly not the way it should be, and I would say that's the case for many of the situations to do with First Nations.

I had the pleasure of going up north with Grand Chief Stan Beardy and our past leader, John Tory, in late

August of last year. We flew up to the most northerly First Nation in Ontario, up to Fort Severn, and we met Chief David Matthews and the council and got a feeling for all the challenges they face. We also visited Webequie First Nation and met the former chief, Scott Jacob. At Fort Severn, the primary school has been closed for five years, and they have some portables set up that they're using for education. I would argue that the principle we're talking about, who's responsible, gets in the way of lots of the needs of First Nations. The provinces are the experts on education. If you really want to make a difference in the future of First Nations, then education, I believe, is key—giving an opportunity for all the First Nations aboriginal people to get the fullest education they can—and yet here we have a situation where the school has not been used in five years. The same is true, I think, in Attawapiskat, where the contamination in the school has not been fixed up. You could go through many other services and compare them to—I see I've used up my time, so I will just say that we support this principle.

I'll allow the other critic to finish.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Toby Barrett: It was 39 years ago that I recognized the first Earth Day. I was teaching environmental science at the time, in 1970, at Simcoe High School, and I can tell you that my students were up to the challenge. Each day, cafeteria and food waste would come down and we would compost it, and then in the spring, people in the community would bring bushel baskets and take home a bushel basket of compost and also some flowers from our greenhouse. Again, that was 1970. I question to what extent our schools are doing that kind of composting today.

Looking back on some of the visionary days of the early 1970s, I often question how far we've progressed. I think one of the most pressing concerns of the Earth Day founder, Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, was environmental sustainability with respect to an ever-growing human population. I feel that Senator Nelson was somewhat ahead of his time in identifying overpopulation and human impact on the environment as a key issue. He fought to bring the environment into the political limelight.

In 1963 he took then-President John F. Kennedy on a conservation tour across the United States.

Following the tour, Nelson took a page from the tactics of Vietnam war protestors and held a teach-in with respect to environmental awareness in April 1970, and that became the first Earth Day. About 20 million people participated at that time.

The name and the symbol of Earth Day are well publicized and well known, but perhaps something has been lost, and specifically I have concern. There seems to be a bit of a gag order in our society with respect to any discussion of the basic issue of more people, more environmental impact, or, as Senator Nelson put it, "The

bigger the population gets, the more serious the problems become ... we have to address the population issue."

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In response to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, it's a tragedy that so much work had to be done by so many people for so long. So many organizations had to work so hard before this moment today could occur. Jordan's Principle should not have to exist. What Jordan's Principle calls for should have arisen before one child had to lose their life in this country.

Jordan's Principle states, "It is imperative that governments meet the needs of the child as a first priority. The obligation to meet the needs of the child first always supersedes government interests to establish jurisdictional dispute processes or policy implementation policies."

How can anyone possibly argue against this very basic principle? In a caring society, the needs of our most vulnerable citizens must always come first, and we would demand nothing less. It is a great tragedy that not one single provincial or territorial government at this point in time has fully implemented Jordan's Principle.

I hope that today what the minister was signalling and indicating is that the government of Ontario is committing fully to enact Jordan's Principle in this province through clear implementation plans, comprehensive changes to relevant policies and comprehensive changes to programs. That's what we need to see: not just the talk; we want to see the walk. The well-being and care that children require has to be paramount above all else. The fact that there's jurisdictional wrangling government to government when it comes to the needs and care of children is absolutely unacceptable and it's absolutely horrific. I'm hoping very much that what the minister is telling us is that Jordan's Principle will be not a principle but an actual fact here in the province of Ontario.

I have to say that we know that Ontario's aboriginal children are living in dire conditions. We know there is a larger proportion of children from First Nations communities who are living in poverty than in the general population. That is unacceptable. We know that the housing and the schools that many of these children have to deal with are something that would not be tolerated or accepted anywhere else. We need to deal with that responsibly.

I have to say, the government has an opportunity. There is a new child advocate in this province. A child advocate can have some responsibility for making sure that the needs of aboriginal children are being met. A big piece of that responsibility can be fulfilled if the child advocate's office is resourced to the state that it should be in order to provide the services, particularly in northern Ontario.

There is opportunity. Let's hope that the government is doing the right thing here. Certainly New Democrats support Jordan's Principle, and we want to see it implemented fully here in Ontario.

I have to leave some time for the important issue of Earth Day. I want to thank the Speaker for the opportunity and say, "Meegwetch."

EARTH DAY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Once again it's Earth Day, and once again the Minister of the Environment is full of self-praise.

When this government talks about increasing renewable energy through the Green Energy Act, it fails to admit that even with the new act, it is only pursuing half the conservation and one third the new renewable energy possibilities that are open to us over the next 15 years.

But in terms of rhetoric, the most misleading is this tendency to refer—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Really?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): "Misleading," yes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The rhetoric that is least worthy of praise is that rhetoric that tends to refer to nuclear energy as emission-free. Minister Smitherman used the term in this House on November 5 and again on March 9. In late March, the Canadian Environmental Law Association wrote to the Minister of Energy strenuously objecting to the government's description of nuclear energy as emission-free. The respected environmental group wrote that nuclear energy is the "most toxic and risky form of energy generation ever invented by humankind."

1540

I have to say that on other Earth Days in the 1980s I was part of marches against the Darlington nuclear power plant. To have a government here that doesn't heed the voices of those who spoke out against Darlington and continues to forge on with its desire to build a huge nuclear establishment in this province, I have to say to you, very simply says that Earth Day is not of consequence to this government, not on the big things, not on the things that determine the course of a civilization, that determine the course of a society—don't care about what happens to our children, grandchildren and their descendants.

For thousands of years we're going to have to deal with the toxic waste that is left behind, the nuclear legacy. This is not a happy thing to celebrate.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge which reads:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing

substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

"Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

"(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital."

As I support this petition, I affix my name thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to read in the following petition to the assembly:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33;

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this petition.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: I present a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:
 "Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario local economies and was a significant contributor to the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salary pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail' legislation) which permitted GM to underfund the pension benefit guarantee fund; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy; and

"Whereas, unlike stakeholders such as vendors and suppliers that accept the risks associated with business, GM retirees and surviving spouses entered into their GM pension plans in good faith, based on the understanding that the funds set aside on their behalf would be secure; and

"Whereas GM salaried retirees contributed a percentage of their annual income to pension plan 0340950 and were permitted only limited contributions to their RRSP due to the federal government's CRA, discriminatory RRSP restrictions for defined benefit plan member numbers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo salaried pension organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the pension benefit guarantee fund; and

"That, in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made that General Motors fully fund pension plan 0340950, and that General Motors continue to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with employment entitlements and the retirement agreement; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect GM pensioners."

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:
 "Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for ... particulate matter (PM2.5); and ...

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

"Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed ... area; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I will sign the petition and give it to Adelina.

SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

"Whereas the Ottawa Catholic School Board's capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary, contingent on provincial grants, and planned for 2008; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions for school boards which are not in debt, where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board's education development charges bylaw;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic School Board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans."

I support this petition and put my name here.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge, which reads:

"Whereas there is no law in Ontario prohibiting pornography and other sexually explicit material from being viewed on computers in public schools and libraries; and

"Whereas there are public schools and ... libraries that do not use Internet filtering software on computers that blocks such inappropriate material; and

"Whereas parents in the province of Ontario have the right to ensure their children are protected from pornography and other inappropriate material available on the Internet in their public schools and libraries;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: That all public schools and libraries in Ontario be required to install Internet

filtering software on computers to avoid screening of sites with inappropriate, explicit sexual content.”

As I agree and support this petition, I affix my name thereto.

1550

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from many citizens who live on the Heritage Line, which is located in the municipality of Otonabee-South Monaghan.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

“Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario’s inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this” great “province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

I will affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Eric.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge which reads:

“Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

“Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals, as has been done in other Canadian provinces; and

“(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital.”

As I agree and support this petition, I affix my name thereto and provide it to Kenzie.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of constituents from Dundas county. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge, which reads:

“Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

“Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals, as has been done in other Canadian provinces; and

“(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital.”

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto and provide it to Nicola.

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to bring this petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It reads as follows:

“Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

"Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

"We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario."

This was submitted by the Lupus Foundation of Ontario. I'm pleased to sign it and to ask page Cameron to carry for it me.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm privileged to present another petition, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;

Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this petition on behalf of the constituents in Durham and Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOBACCO DAMAGES AND HEALTH CARE COSTS RECOVERY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RECOUVREMENT DU MONTANT DES DOMMAGES ET DU COÛT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ IMPUTABLES AU TABAC

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 155, An Act to permit the Province to recover damages and health care

costs incurred because of tobacco related diseases and to make a complementary amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 155, Loi autorisant la province à recouvrer le montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé engagés en raison des maladies liées au tabac et à apporter une modification complémentaire à la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a my pleasure to speak—

Mr. Mike Colle: I hope you make this interesting today.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to do my best, because it's about pleasing the MPPs on the opposite side; it's not about anything else. It's about me entertaining the Liberal rump to my left and those Liberals in front of me. That's what this is about, in general, but I also want to say that we are on live. It's almost 4 o'clock, and I want to welcome the citizens to this political forum. I hope they enjoy the debate—those who are able to watch it on cable—because it can be fun from time to time. It can be; not always, I understand. That's why I make it my goal to please as best I can.

This is Bill 155, the tobacco health care cost recovery bill, which is legislation to allow lawsuits against tobacco companies to recover the cost of health care benefits caused by any tobacco wrongs, and it is a wrong. Tobacco kills. We've known that for quite some time. Although many have denied it, tobacco does kill. I'm happy to report that I hate cigarettes. I tried them a couple of times, I have to admit, but they're not fun, and I don't enjoy them.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You know the story. That's why you ask about cigars, right? I have to admit that in spite of the fact that I hate cigarettes, I have smoked cigars from time to time—

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think someone has one of those little black things on a desk somewhere.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It's off? Okay. Continue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Imagine that it might have been me and I didn't even hear it. It's not possible, because I rarely bring it into this chamber.

Cigarettes: out of the question. I've never smoked them, except that I have tried them, and I'm happy to be one who is free of that; I really am. I can't imagine those who smoke and are addicted to the nicotine. They just do all sorts of things to try to stop the habit, right? It's like a middle-class illness, almost, where they smoke, they don't know what to do, they go to doctors, they get patches. They just can't stop. It's kind of nuts, and eventually it's going to kill them, unless you're George Burns and you die at age 100. I think that's when he died, at age 100. He was a serious cigar smoker. God bless, it would

be so nice to be able to smoke all you want and die at 100. It's not bad.

1600

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: He might have lived to 120.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He could have lived longer, but do you want to live longer than 100? I just don't know. If you are on crutches or somebody has to carry you, somebody has to clean you up—you understand what I'm saying. It's not a pretty sight. If I reach 100, I'm ready. I am. But all these smokers, these cigarette types who just don't know what to do to quit—and I often tell the story of my father, working class guy. I'll tell it again. Why not? He came here in 1956 from Italy. During those years, 1956 to 1960, it was pretty hard times economically. It was a serious recession, if not close to a depression. He travelled across all of Ontario looking for work, because that's what immigrants do. They'll do any sort of work to be able to save some money aside and call the rest of us five years later. I've got to tell you that he hated Diefenbaker. He really did. It's like every time he heard "Conservatives" the only word that came to his head was "Diefenbaker." He hated the Conservatives forever and, I've got to admit, supported the Liberals much of the time until Rosie Marchese got involved. Mercifully, I was able to convert him, right? But it took work. But that's not the nature of the story.

The story has to do with him travelling in northern Ontario. He was travelling and working with a bunch of people, and it was in this co-op type of place where he was sleeping with a whole lot of other people. He used to be a heavy smoker. I didn't know that, but evidently he was. He also drank a little bit, but only with a meal. Red wine, some white, but mostly with a meal. But he was also a heavy smoker. They caught him smoking, and they said to him, "If we catch you again, we're going to send you back to Toronto," and that was the end of it. He stopped smoking, cold turkey.

One has to ask: How do you do that? Where do you find the power to be able to say "no more" and immediately stop, versus all the middle-class smokers who just don't know what to do and they try and they get back to it after six months or a year, and they go to doctors for treatment, psychoanalysis, whatever it takes. How many people do you know who keep trying and they can't stop? Versus a working man who is told, "If we catch you again, we're going to send you back to Toronto, and you won't have any job."

Look at the economic imperative of a working man who says, "I need the money" and stops immediately. I love that story. I like telling it because I think it's instructive and helpful to people. I've got to say, when young people start smoking, they don't know how to stop. What have we done to be able to prevent young people from smoking? In fact, we are noticing, discovering and being told that in spite of the Liberal claim that people are smoking less, more and more young people are smoking; not fewer, but more. That is tragic because we know cigarette smoking kills you, with the rare

exception. For some people, it doesn't matter what they do; they seem to be inured to the crap that they put into their system and they live to be whatever age. But the majority of us, if we're smokers, we die.

I do admit I have picked up a cigar smoking habit, but I've got to tell you I'm not addicted. I do this every now and then.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought only Conservatives smoked cigars.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, no. There's a whole range of people, a whole range of socio-economic—

Mr. Mike Colle: If they come from Cuba, the NDP can smoke them.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm a proud supporter of the Cubans and what they've managed to do in the last 50 years. I am. But I do like Cuban cigars. I have to admit that as well.

But you won't find me smoking cigars too often. It's only every now and then with a little porto, which I love. It's just a nice thing to do in the summer when I'm feeling good after a hard day's work and it's still sunny when I get back home, and I do that. I'm not promoting it. Those of you citizens watching this program, I'm not promoting cigars, Cuban or otherwise. It's not a healthy thing. Hopefully, if you can and you are a smoker, you've got to learn to cut down; you have to learn to cut down. There's not much more I can tell to you help you.

I've got to tell you, we've got to go after these tobacco companies. These people have been merchants of death for a long, long time. That's why the bill is a good initiative. Ontario has come along a little late on the scene, but better late than never. It's true that the Liberals are not leading on this issue, because other provinces have already started, especially and including British Columbia, but welcome to the club, Ontario Liberals. They're part of the joining of the provinces in saying, "Tobacco smoke kills us. It puts a heavy toll on our health care system, and we're going to go after them," and I think that's good.

For how long have we known that tobacco companies have done their very best to defend themselves by saying that there is no evidence that cigarette smoking kills people? For how long have we heard that? For the last 50 or 60 years they've been saying that. We have known that these chemicals kill, and people like Devra Davis—whom I invited a couple of years ago, because we were talking about the right to know what chemicals are produced in our area and for the public to know which companies are producing what and spilling into our water system and spilling into our air. We have a right to know. That's why we invited Devra Davis, who writes in her book entitled *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* that it's taken governments decades to control chemicals such as asbestos, benzene and vinyl chloride while workers and so many other people die on a daily basis. It's taken us so long, and there are so many hundreds of chemicals that are being produced that are harming and changing our physiology, altering it in a way that hurts and destroys human life, and we simply are letting them

produce more and more chemicals by the day. All the while, these corporations deny that there is any connection to physical health.

Devra Davis talks in her book about how in the 1930s Germany and others knew that there was a link between smoking and lung cancer. They knew that in the 1930s. The tobacco companies themselves knew well of the health risks as early as the 1950s and suppressed the evidence. We also know that the Royal College of Physicians delayed its 1962 landmark report on smoking and ill health for years due to the tobacco industry influence. We know that millions of dollars of taxpayer money in the US and UK were spent in the 1970s and 1980s to try to develop a safe cigarette.

Mr. Mike Colle: No such thing.
Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, there is no such thing. Imagine. You just call it a safe cigarette, make it appear and give the illusion that somehow they've created something that takes away the ill effect of that smoking, whatever is contained in that cigarette, magically. Tobacco companies continue to profit to the tune of billions of dollars a year while people continue to get sick and die.

1610
British Columbia has led the way in this regard, implementing legislation in 1998 and 2000 that was called the BC Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, on which our own bill is modelled and hopefully will be pursued—and I know it's going to take years. It's not going to be done simultaneously; it's not going to end in one year; it's going to take a whole long time, and I know that a whole lot of lawyers are going to enjoy this because a whole lot of these people are going to make a whole lot of money. I understand. Lawyers will make money on this because it's going to be dragged out and it will be 10 long years and a lot of lawyers are going to become rich out of it. But what are you going to do?

Mr. John O'Toole: Become a lawyer.
Mr. Rosario Marchese: Becoming a lawyer at 56 is a bit too late. It's too late for me. But there are a whole lot of lawyers who are just going to enjoy this, I've got to tell you.
You know what? As good and as helpful as this bill can be, I just wonder about the commitment the government has to deal with one issue that I talked about the other day, and that is the illegal manufacturing of cigarettes in this province, in this country, the manufacturing of illegal cigarettes outside of this country in the US, the import of those illegal cigarettes across our border here in Ontario, and the little effort the Ontario government has made to end the illegal production of cigarettes in this province and to end the illegal transportation of cigarettes into this province. Not once have I heard the minister or the government say, "We're tackling this problem. It's huge, and we're going to end it." Speaker, have you ever heard any one of your colleagues talk about that? Because I haven't; I haven't heard the Attorney General once speak to this matter. You would have thought that the minister would have introduced, in his bill and his

debate here in this House—and that other members of the Liberal caucus would speak to this issue. Not once.

Do you know how many cigarette butts are found outside of schools on a regular, daily basis that young people consume, illegal cigarettes smoked by young people in our system on a daily basis? Tonnes and tonnes of them. They find these cigarette butts outside of the schools and they're able to say, "Hmm. This is not legal; it's illegal."

How do we control it? Why aren't we controlling it? Why are we not working with the federal government with a plan to make sure we stop the production and the illegal transportation of these cigarettes in our province, whether the product is here or outside of Ontario? How come we don't hear anyone speak to that issue?

The Auditor General says that we're losing half a billion dollars' worth of tax dollars because of these illegal cigarettes that are produced here and abroad—half a billion bucks. It would be nice, I think, if the government were able to get some of that money and use it in a way that could prevent young people from smoking versus not getting that half-billion dollars and having young people smoke, and smoking illegal cigarettes to boot.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It makes for a lot of crap.
Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's the same crap; whether it's illegal or legal, it's the same crap. But it's a half-billion dollars that you're forgoing as a government, and you're doing very little. I just don't get it. I don't understand why we're not saying, "We, the Ontario government, and the federal government have met on many occasions. We understand the problemo, and here's what we propose to deal with it"—not once. So I am at a loss to understand why the government doesn't make any serious effort to deal with that.

I'm also at a loss to understand why it is that members of this Legislature supported the bill introduced by my colleague from Nickel Belt. It was a bill that bans the sale of single-packaged and flavoured cigarillos. It's been supported by this House, supported by this government, has received royal assent, but hasn't yet been proclaimed. Why not? I don't get it. Why not? If there is support from the Liberals—because you're in charge—and it's received royal assent, why hasn't it been proclaimed? Where's the problemo here? Who's stopping that proclamation, and where is the Premier on it? Where's the minister, where are the Liberal members on this? If we're all on the same team, you would think that we would be pushing the same elephant, and it doesn't appear like we are. If this is a good bill and we want to be able to ban the sale of single-packaged flavoured cigarillos, then let's do it; let's find out where the blocks are, understand who's preventing it and make it happen.

So while this bill is a very useful bill that we support as New Democrats, we want to know from the government where you stand on the illegal production of cigarettes and where you stand on your role as an enforcer to prevent illegal cigarettes from coming into this province; where you stand vis-à-vis the federal government on a

position to be able to deal with that; and where you stand on the whole issue of the private member's bill that was introduced by my colleague from Nickel Belt, which has received royal assent and has not yet been proclaimed.

Those of you Liberals who are going to do two minutes, help me out a little bit. Make me understand and help me to solve some of the questions that I raise today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would like to thank the member for Trinity-Spadina for so eloquently going on about the hazards of smoking. I would just like to say that I was one of the people who quit cold turkey. I went and visited an ear, nose and throat specialist in 1983 and he said, "You're allergic to smoke," so I went home and stopped smoking immediately. I saw him again about 20 years later and reminded him that he was the person who had saved me thousands and thousands of dollars, and he said, "How was that?" I said, "It was because you told me I was allergic to smoke." He said, "Well, of course, you're allergic to smoke. Everybody's allergic to smoke and it's an extreme allergic reaction that causes people to die from it in fires." So smoking can be overcome.

I believe that you referred to smoking cigars as well. Smoke is smoke. It's damaging to people. I think another aspect of this is the fact that, too often, we see people smoking on TV shows and in movies and it glorifies it for our young people. I believe that that's something else the media should take responsibility for and really do something to limit. If a product is dangerous and the manufacturer is selling it, then the manufacturer should be responsible for that.

A key part of lowering our health care costs down the road will be encouraging and educating our population against the hazards of things like smoking, overeating, things like this. We've seen a huge expansion in our health care costs over the last few years and I really do believe that, through educating our communities to the dangers of these things, we can eliminate and reduce dramatically our health care costs through having a healthier society. These are all things that are extremely important, and I appreciate the comments made by the member from Trinity-Spadina in trying to eradicate this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Trinity-Spadina is always informative and always entertaining, and I think he's made, substantively, most of the arguments in terms of the illegal cigarette issue, but I have a question I want to put on the record here. This past weekend, in touring around during constituency week, a small business operator had been visited by the so-called smoke police. He had been given, as a promotional item, cigarette lighters with the brand of the cigarette on them, and they were on the counter. Now, the cigarettes are behind the locked doors, as they should be, or under the counter, out of sight—the power wall issue—but the question was: Isn't it illegal to advertise or have display areas for cigarettes in these convenience stores? I think

that's a very good question. I said I would inquire, and that's what I'm doing right now. I hope the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, or someone who is listening, will see whether or not it's legal to have these lighters with the cigarette brand on the counter. Isn't that, in fact, enticing young people to identify? I think that's an appropriate question.

1620

More importantly, it has been understood and accepted, including by me—and our side for sure would say—that smoking is bad for you. This is the method of recovering those health care costs, following the template developed by British Columbia under the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, which has been upheld in the Supreme Court. We're not in any way opposed, but I think we want to get it right this time. Illegal, contraband cigarettes: Even the Attorney General commented in 2008 that there could be a \$500-million or more loss of revenue. You know, it's fine to do the symbolic things that we agree with, but let's get down to doing some real work that defends and protects the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As was stated already, the member from Trinity-Spadina is one of most entertaining orators in this place; let's give him that. Now that I'm Deputy Speaker and run the risk of perhaps nodding off a time or two, as we in the Chair all do, sitting for long hours, it's members like the member from Trinity-Spadina who keep one awake; let's give him that.

But he did ask two questions, and I haven't heard answers to those questions. There's a government member left, in terms of questions and comments, and I would challenge whoever stands up next to give us the answers. One question was about why this government doesn't do more to crack down on the sale of illegal cigarettes in this province. Number two was, why does the government not proclaim Ms. Gelinas's bill about those single-sale, often flavoured, designed-for-children cigarettes, which has been given royal assent and not been proclaimed? Two very clear questions that would definitely help the state of our health in Ontario have not been answered. I would challenge the next government member who stands up to give an answer to the member from Trinity-Spadina and to all of Ontario about why there has been no action in these two egregious areas.

These affect the health of our children. We know that our children are buying those contraband cigarettes; we know they are. They're much, much cheaper, and for young people who don't have discretionary income, as older people do, that's where they go. As the member from Trinity-Spadina said, they're finding the butts outside the schoolyards. So if the government really cares, please answer the two questions posed by the member from Trinity-Spadina—a simple request.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: The member for Trinity-Spadina brought to mind a number of different issues that I think

are worth examining. I just want to say that this bill, which talks about following through on comprehensive legal action on cost recovery from major tobacco companies, is an undertaking that is really national in scope, and this bill asks us to join with other provinces that are doing it. I think it's something we have to do, because we know the incredible multi-billion dollar costs to our health care system as a result of this cancerous weed that people have been smoking and still do smoke.

It is also troubling—he has asked very seriously about this before; I have listened to him—that this contraband plague still inflicts Ontario with all these cigarettes that are being manufactured illegally. I know the Solicitor General has talked about working together with the Ontario Provincial Police and the RCMP. I do agree with him that more needs to be done. It is an incredibly serious problem that especially affects young people, somewhat similar to the other scourge that affects young people; that is, drug use. It is not given that much play, but there are serious problems with crack cocaine, marijuana, that are part of the huge underground economy and that are also very dangerous to the health of our young people. In fact, just last weekend there were three young girls who were taken by the police because they had overdosed on amphetamines not too far from where I live. So that's something that I think our government provincially has to grapple with and it's something that I think all governments, but all society, have to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The whole thing is tragic: 13,000 people die in Ontario because of smoking-related illness. That's a big number. I know that we are all worried about it, and I think that cuts across all political boundaries. There's no doubt about it.

One of the items I didn't raise was the tobacco industry, which is another issue that we need to deal with, because 95% of the tobacco growers are in Ontario. It's a huge number of farmers who are involved in the production of tobacco, and we've got to worry about this particular group in terms of understanding the impact that this bill will have on tobacco farmers and to work with these farmers to cement a future livelihood as tobacco sales inevitably decline. When we do these things, which we support, it has intended or unintended consequences on tobacco farmers. As I pointed out, 95% of them are here in Ontario, and we've got to worry about how we help those farmers make the transition to some other type of farming, because their livelihood is affected by this. So while I didn't have a chance to talk much about that, we need to reflect on what needs to be done.

I was very conscious of the fact that the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock did something that was remarkable. I know it affects his health, and he took measures to deal with it. God bless.

In terms of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, he recognizes that we've got to deal with the illegal production of cigarettes, and we need the government to be

able to deal with it, in order to solve that particular problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I didn't realize I was going to be up so quickly, but that's fine. It's a pleasure and a privilege to deal with this issue. Certainly I was a kid of the 1950s, and if anybody has seen that incredible television series *Mad Men*, what's absolutely striking about that particular series, other than the fact that it's well done and well enacted, is the fact that in every scene, every character, just about, is smoking. There has been a significant difference from the 1950s and 1960s until today. But the sad reality is we still have five million people a year dying, and it's still projected to be about 10 million people a year dying in the year 2025. Smoking rates around the world are going up, and smoking rates among young people in Ontario are also increasing. That is sad news indeed.

I should say right off the top that I absolutely plan on supporting this bill; there's no question there. We in the New Democratic Party caucus will be supporting it, recognizing with a caveat, of course, that this will make a lot of lawyers very, very wealthy over the next 10 years and that many of these lawsuits will take about 10 years to even be resolved. But be that as it may, we hope the government steps up and does the kind of action against the tobacco companies that has been done in other jurisdictions, notably the United States, where \$250 billion is going to be collected from American tobacco companies because of the actions, in conjunction with each other, of 50 different states. So that's a significant amount of money, and that can go into funding what we need funded in the way of health care.

Again, when we're looking at health care, we're looking at a situation where not only 85% of the lung cancer cases are caused by smoking, but 30% of all cancer cases are caused by smoking. That's an astounding statistic. We forget that there are other cancers that are also linked to tobacco smoking. This is a huge impact on our health budget. It's a huge impact on our health.

If we were looking at those kinds of death rates in any other regard, we'd call it a genocide. Five million, 10 million: These are the kinds of figures that you hear in Legislatures like this one in reference to genocide, in reference to tragedies of mass proportion.

You heard the member from Trinity–Spadina speak about how for years—for decades, in fact—since the 1930s, when it was first discovered that, guess what, smoking causes lung cancer, tobacco companies managed to quash that information from getting out, and they did that by using lobbying techniques, by using their money, by using advertising. So it has been a long, long struggle to try to claw back some reality, even in the scientific community. That's a very depressing statistic, when we know that the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons didn't release a report for several years because of lobbying by the tobacco companies. This is sad news indeed.

And it's personal news, because that there's probably not a person in this chamber who has not had some smoking-affected illness in their family. That's what these statistics really mean. In my case, it was my immediate family. My mother died from smoking-related illness, my father died directly of lung disease and my brother died much too early of lung cancer itself. In my family, when we look at our family photos of car trips, which we often did—most families do—and family trips and early Super 8 videos, if you remember those things, you see people climbing out of the car and these wafts of smoke, because it was the done thing in those days to smoke in the car with the windows up, with the children in the back seat.

It's amazing, really, for the boomer generation that any of us are free from the horrors of lung cancer, because of the patterns of consumption of our parents, not to mention the fact that most of our mothers smoked while pregnant. It's astounding, when you look at it, that we're as healthy as we are.

There has been a consciousness shift, but not without phenomenal tragedy. My brother, Donald DiNovo, was not only a radio broadcaster but he was a member of the rock band Lighthouse, if anybody remembers them; they won many awards. This was a man who was cut down at the age of 51 by lung cancer.

The question is, then, if we know all of this, and we're doing all of this, why are our children starting to smoke, even with this information in their hands?

There was a very good point made by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and that was that they are still being sold on the concept of smoking cigarettes by the entertainment industry. There's no question. We've all heard of product placement. Well, let me tell you that the movie *Pulp Fiction* alone probably started a whole generation smoking that wouldn't have considered smoking before, because it was seen as cool. Kids start smoking because they think it's cool and it makes them look cool.

An even more deadly reason to start for young girls, who are leading the way in terms of starting to smoke, is weight loss. I mean, weight loss—please.

Clearly, the educational programs that governments have run aren't working. If you keep doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, that's called crazy. Government programs that keep doing the same things, expecting different results, are simply crazy. They're not working.

Our girl children and our boy children are starting to smoke. "Why?" is the question. Product placement is part of the answer. We have to hold our media to account. There's absolutely no good reason, unless it's a period piece like *Mad Men*—and trust me, I bet anything that *Mad Men* is in part a product of those self-same tobacco companies. They can do product placement in just about every scene.

There's no reason for the characters, the movie stars, those stars of stage and screen and also, of course, those music stars to smoke publicly in their promotional

material or in the movies that they make. There's no reason for it. In what character development does holding a cigarette in your hand really play a part? I don't get it. But this is what kids are watching. This is what they're taking in and this is why they still think it's cool to smoke. James Dean isn't really dead. It's seen as cool to smoke. We've got to attack that in some way, shape or form. It seems to me that that's a question of having a serious conversation about product placement and sponsorship of television shows, movies, CDs—anything that our children watch and that our children take to heart.

Again, what wasn't raised perhaps by the member from Trinity-Spadina and what I haven't heard about yet, and presumably I will, I hope, as the critic for small business, is the impact on our corner stores of the contraband tobacco trade. The contraband tobacco trade is taking its toll not only on our youth and not only on our tax revenue, but it is also taking its toll on our small business owners. Many of these small business owners are first-generation immigrants. These are the people who come over here and work 18 hours a day opening up a corner store. Then they're told by the government that they've got to hide the cigarettes they sell—fair enough. It cost them money. They sucked it up; they did it. But now they're watching their customers buying contraband cigarettes at sometimes less than half the cost, and that's hurting them too. They're looking at this government and saying, "Why aren't you doing something? This is a dangerous, illegal activity." These cigarettes are being manufactured—they're being imported; often, many of them from China. And we know that the Chinese government has far laxer manufacturing, environmental and health laws than we do.

These cigarettes are coming in and they're ending up in the school yards, and small business owners are quite right to ask, "We've done everything you've asked us to do at considerable cost. We've hidden that which makes us the most profit." Quite frankly, it does. Lotteries and cigarettes make corner stores the most profit. "And yet, we don't see the government doing anything about the contraband sellers and manufacturers around the corner who are taking our business and killing people." Let's be frank, they are. It's a death industry. They are merchants of death. There's nothing redeemable, one can say, about those who sell illegal, contraband cigarettes, and this is going on. Small business owners are wondering, why did we take the brunt of this when they're not?

So again, this is the same challenge that the member from Trinity-Spadina threw at this government. We just want an answer here, a very simple answer. We are not doing enough to stop that, and that's affecting our children and it's causing death among our children.

Certainly France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt—her bill needs to be passed. There's no question about that. This is a bill that, unlike many and most private members' bills, has actually gone through to the point where it's received royal assent. It's hard to imagine anybody objecting to a bill that's going to outlaw

the new merchandising that the large tobacco companies are engaged in now which is directly to children, which is single-sale cigarillos that are candy-flavoured, if you can believe it. It's diabolical: to our children. Here's a bill that went through first reading and went through second reading, which is always a minor miracle in this place. It went from second reading to committee—a major miracle. It went to royal assent. My goodness. Who ever knew? And now, it's not proclaimed. Why? Simply because it was introduced by a member in the opposition? This is sad, and this is affecting the health of our children. They can buy these as we speak, while we're here debating this bill.

1640

The other aspect of this is, we're hoping that this will not lead to the kind of backroom deal with tobacco companies that happened, for example, with the federal government settlement in July with tobacco companies for their smuggling in the early 1990s. For those watching at home who perhaps didn't know this, the companies are only required to pay \$1.2 billion over a number of years, and that amounts to about 25% of the profit that Imperial Tobacco made by smuggling. So we hope that this bill will not precede some backdoor dealing with the tobacco companies that will result in that kind of settlement, because we know that that kind of settlement is simply not good enough. It's not good enough.

We also hope that what does proceed from here is a whole new look at tobacco and the tobacco industry—"merchants of death" is not too strong a term to call that particular industry—a whole new look at the ways in which they get around the law, whatever law it might be, and the ways in which they're still promoting and advertising, yes, their products in really quite underhanded ways—again, the kind of product placement that we see in videos and movies, and again this kind of marketing to our children that is happening under our noses with flavoured cigarillos sold as candy, literally almost, to our children. So we hope they do something there.

We hope they don't continue down the same paths that haven't worked in the past, which is a kind of open education. The smoking rate increasing among our children is something we should all take to heart. It's not enough just to go after the tobacco companies for the death they've already caused, for the health care costs they're already causing. What we have to do for the next generation is look at ways of preventing children from picking up that first cigarette. We have to look at ways that will make smoking uncool. We have to speak, of course, to the kind of definition of what a real woman is that goes into young girls picking up smoking because it makes them thinner. That's another discussion for another day, but certainly for any parent in this House who sees a young girl start smoking, you can bet that that's a component in why she's lit up for the very first time.

Again, I would just reiterate the two questions that we still have not received answers to from this government. One is, why are contraband cigarettes still being produced and marketed to our children in schools? It's

estimated now that about 46% of cigarette sales in this province are contraband. You've heard about the lost tax revenue. I'm more concerned about the health revenue. I'm more concerned about the reality that this is killing people and that these cigarettes—there's no such thing as a healthy cigarette, but they are even worse. They're even less regulated than those cigarettes that are made by the large tobacco companies. So why not do something about it? It's pretty clear-cut. We know how to crack down on it; why don't we do it?

Number two: Please, there's a bill from the member from Nickel Belt that has everyone in agreement, a bill that's definitely designed to keep cigarettes out of the hands of young people, cigarettes that are not being marketed as cigarettes but as candy, really, as flavoured cigarillos. Some of them are even perfumed; they smell. It's outrageous. Why can't we get that into law? It only requires proclamation. It would be a very nice time—in fact, I see the Minister of Health sitting over there—to proclaim it now. Why not? Let's do it. Let's protect our children.

Finally, and this requires all parties—of course, it is absolutely unpartisan: We've got to put our heads together and figure out what is motivating our children to smoke and do something about that. I think that really means looking at media, looking at where they are getting this idea that it's cool, and attacking it at source. That means product placement. It means looking at the large entertainment firms. We know that Toronto has been called Hollywood North. Let's take advantage of that. We have an opportunity here. We can talk about the films that are being made in Toronto. We can make sure that they're not also promoting tobacco consumption. We can look at all of that. We can do that in Ontario; we can do it. I would very much encourage all parties to look at that, and I suspect that there are probably a number of private members' bills that could come forward and would talk about product placement.

I know it's very difficult, when you're passing a bill that's going to increase lawyers' business—if we're going to go after the tobacco companies, make it about the settlement, not about the backroom deal. Let's really hold them to account with this bill, since that's what it purports to do, and let's really use those funds—and there will be considerable funds that come out of those lawsuits, the government being a party to many of them, I hope—to make sure that the next generation doesn't do what generations have done before.

Finally, to all of those out there who are listening and who have lost someone to lung cancer before their time, to lung disease or to cancer of any sort—now that we know that 85% of lung cancer is caused by smoking and 30% of cancers that are not lung cancer are caused by smoking, not to mention high blood pressure, heart disease and others: Do something. Write to your MPP. Make sure that at your school and in your community you really, in a sense, take this issue into your own hands. Get the word out that we need to do more than we've been doing. We need to do more because what

we've been doing isn't working. Smoking rates are increasing, children are dying, adults are dying, to the tune of 10 million projected by the year 2025. We have something to do for that future generation: to pass the word along.

Just in conclusion, of course we in the New Democratic Party are going to support this bill. It's a small step in the right direction. As per my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, I would love to hear answers to the two critical questions: Why aren't we doing more about contraband cigarettes and why, oh why are we not proclaiming the member from Nickel Belt's bill, which would in fact prevent our children from smoking today?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I quite enjoyed the intervention by my friend from Parkdale-High Park.

I was reminiscing a bit about the history of smoking laws in Ontario in general. I remember that when I came to this Legislature back in 1987, it was common practice to have ashtrays in the lobbies. We could smoke in committee rooms. It was a place that we would now, in 2009, scarcely recognize. The opposition lobby over on the other side: You could hardly see in it for the smoke—

Mr. John O'Toole: It may still be the same.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: The member for Durham suggests that it may still be the same today.

But we have made huge progress on this file. We haven't completely stopped smoking in the province of Ontario, but we have changed, I think, a mindset in the vast majority of Ontarians—that pregnant women shouldn't smoke. We have stopped smoking in places I don't think we even considered: smoking in cars with children in them. We have stopped those kinds of things.

I think we are making great progress, but this bill itself is not about that directly. What this bill is about is suing the people who have made the profit from endangering the lives of literally millions of people and causing the deaths of—there's probably not a person in this room who hasn't had a relative or a friend who succumbed to something, cancer or heart disease or another serious disease, that has been caused by smoking. This is about taking these tobacco companies and holding them to account.

1650

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, the member from Parkdale-High Park was quick to get up and take the time to make her points with respect to Bill 155.

I think we've all really agreed that "too little, too late" would be the best way to describe this bill. BC, as we know, has done it. They've taken it through, it has been challenged, and it has stood up in court. We look at leadership around the world, whether it's the World Health Organization and their attempts to develop a more consolidated strategy—it's the first treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization. It was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2003 and

came into force in February 2005. So there's evidence around the world of the health effects, the side effects, and we've all attested to those.

I think the member from Parkdale-High Park made some very good and very sound arguments as to why we should move on with this bill, at the same time admitting there are some things in here, under the Attorney General—that's Mr. Bentley's role. Retroactivity provisions would be the most, if you will—it's been touched on in some of the statements here today, and the last speaker from Algoma said, that a lot of people, because of lack of information and knowledge, smoked in their cars when driving around with children. I certainly was a product of that. I'm not sure they did it deliberately or intentionally. So it comes down into law—why there would be a lot of lawyers' money spent on this—is the intent. Often, when you go into the retroactivity liability issues, they're going to spend a lot of time arguing about who knew what when and that they denied the information. People didn't have the information. I used to smoke. I don't smoke now. My children probably were in the car when I smoked. Am I guilty? That's what parents are concerned about—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I'm pleased to join the discussion on Bill 155, the tobacco costs recovery bill.

The scientific evidence is clear, and it has been very clear for many, many years, that smoking causes lung cancer. Smoking is responsible for almost 85% of lung cancer deaths. When we are talking about 85% of lung cancer deaths, the fact is, scientifically, the cause is not deterministic, which means that if 100 persons smoke cigarettes their whole lives, 85 of them are going to die of lung cancer anyway. We can't identify who is going to die of lung cancer, but for sure we can say that 85 of them are going to die of lung cancer. That's why the effect is not deterministic.

Sometimes people say, "My father smoked his whole life, and he died at the age of 95 from a heart attack." To them I will say that, yes, my sister-in-law smoked cigarettes and died of lung cancer at the age of 85. Every one of us has an example of relatives or friends who passed away from lung cancer due to smoking.

It is very clear, and it is well established in scientific studies, that lung cancer is caused by smoking. Smoking is the major cause of lung cancer and is responsible for 85% of lung cancer deaths. So it is logical that, as a government, we have to hold the root cause of lung cancer, which is basically the companies who are promoting the sale of cigarettes, the sale of tobacco—they should really be paying for the costs of damage caused by selling tobacco and caused by lung cancer. This is what this bill is all about.

I am pleased to support this bill. I hope my colleagues in this House will support this bill and we will hold the companies who are selling tobacco—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

The member for Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to the members from Richmond Hill, Algoma–Manitoulin and Durham.

The member from Durham is right. It was almost a decade ago that BC passed similar legislation, so in a sense it is too little, too late. One can only imagine how many people have died from lung-related diseases due to smoking in that 10-year period when we could have had a bill.

Certainly, the member from Richmond Hill is right in pointing out to anybody who's watching that it's not good enough to say that you have a relative who lived to 85 and smoked, because for every story like that, there's another story about someone who died in their twenties or thirties or forties or fifties who smoked as well. The real question is that smoking kills—I mean, that's the answer, I should say. Smoking does kill. It kills five million a year and a projected—this is what's truly scary—10 million in the year 2025. That's what's really terrifying.

Again, there's no question about this bill. We all support it. We all want to see it move ahead, into committee at least and out. The only two questions I have that still remain and still have not been answered were the questions of the member from Trinity–Spadina: Why don't we pass Ms. Gélinas's bill? Why don't we make it illegal to buy these flavoured one-off cigarillos sold and marketed to children? Why don't we stop the production of illegal cigarettes, that contraband? Why does this government, this Attorney General, not make it his *raison d'être* to get rid of that? This is what's killing our children.

I just want to, again, thank all of those who have written to me about this issue and those relatives out there who have suffered because of this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to stand today and offer some comments on Bill 155, the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

I want to begin my remarks by actually taking comments from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, who talked a few moments ago about the attitudes that people have had over the past few decades towards tobacco smoke. I would have to join him in remembering—although I wasn't here to know—how blue the air was behind me in the lobby with cigarettes. Even doctors showed up with cigarettes, smoking cigarettes, to talk to their patients.

I remember being a bit in the vanguard when I stuck a sign on my front door that said, "No smoking." I also remember, as a bride, how many ashtrays you got as gifts, because of course if you were setting up a household, you would have to be able to provide for your guests in that particular aspect, just as you would by having teacups. But I had the sign at the front door and I remember—and this would be 30 years ago, when certainly it wasn't in vogue to make those kinds of state-

ments—I had people come to visit me and I offered them a cup of coffee. The husband said, "Oh, I can only have coffee if I have a cigarette." I didn't make any comment, but I got out only three cups. When he saw that therefore I wasn't serving him coffee, he discovered, in fact, that he could have a cup of coffee without a cigarette. I always remember that because it just seemed to me to demonstrate the importance of being able to make a decision and stand by it. Obviously, he assumed that if he told me he couldn't have coffee without a cigarette, I would relent and allow that. But as someone who was very allergic to tobacco smoke, it was certainly not going to be something I was going to allow in my own house.

I have to say that when the anti-smoking movement was in its infancy, I was somewhat doubtful of the ability to change public opinion to the extent that we have seen over the last few years. Even watching how the restaurants dealt with it: They had a very small corner by the kitchen which was the non-smoking area and the rest of the restaurant was the smoking area, and then gradually you saw how the non-smoking area grew to a point that, when it became illegal to have smoking in restaurants, it had almost become no longer an issue, because of the number of people who were really very happy to be in a non-smoking area.

1700

So as a society, we have certainly recognized the importance of limiting smoking, discouraging smoking, and yes, there are some guideposts that anyone can look at in terms of advertising, in terms of the need for age identification. There are certain guideposts here that would suggest that there has been success.

But then, as part of that whole effort, came the issue of taking legal action. About 10 years ago, in the 1990s, the Americans, in fact, had a landmark case where they were successful in being able to sue the companies for having provided people with a product that over and over and over again was seen to be something that was very damaging to human health.

So, in the same way, British Columbia then introduced its Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, and it stood the test of the Supreme Court. We find ourselves in a similar kind of situation, looking at the bill that we have today.

In looking at that bill, we have to look at the fact that we're now in the company of a number of Canadian provinces that are seeking to do the same thing, and this comes largely as a result of the recognition of some very stark statistics.

The government's commitment was to reduced tobacco consumption by 20% before the end of 2007. According to their statistics, that was achieved ahead of schedule. Between 2003 and 2006, there was a 31.8% decline in tobacco consumption, indicating that approximately 4.6 billion fewer cigarettes were sold. But tobacco-related diseases cost the Ontario economy \$1.6 billion for health care annually, resulting in a \$4.4-billion loss—in illness and, therefore, loss in productivity—and accounting for 500,000 hospital days each year. When

you look at this as something that success at prevention would make preventable, it gives you an idea of how much drag there is, not only in terms of individuals and their families and the suffering of those people, but also as a problem in terms of the province itself.

According to Health Canada, more than 37,000 people will die prematurely this year in Canada due to tobacco use. The average smoker will die about eight years earlier than a similar non-smoker, and there is strong scientific evidence that smoking is related to more than two dozen diseases and conditions. The only good news in this is that many of these conditions do start to reverse when people cease to smoke.

The Auditor General in his 2008 report gave us a different aspect to this whole issue of tobacco and tobacco use and tobacco taxes, which is another aspect of this that needs our attention. The objective of the audit by the Auditor General was to “assess whether the Ministry had adequate and cost-effective policies and procedures in place to ensure that the correct amount of tobacco, gasoline, and diesel-fuel tax is collected and paid to the province in accordance with the law.”

He goes on to say, “It remains our view that the ministry’s current policies, procedures, and information technology systems are still inadequate.” In fact, Health Canada estimates that overall tobacco consumption in Ontario decreased by approximately 27% between 1999 and 2007. Even assuming a 27% decrease in consumption since 1999, the significant tax increases on tobacco during that same period should have produced a more than tripling of annual tobacco tax revenue, from about \$500 million in 1999 to as much as \$1.7 billion in 2007. So the potential tax gap for 2007 alone could be in the half-a-billion-dollar range.

The tax rates on cigarettes and cut tobacco have particularly increased since 1999. At the conclusion of the audit in early 2008, cigarettes and cut tobacco were taxed at 12.35 cents per gram of cut tobacco while cigars were taxed at 56.6% of a predetermined taxable cost; in 1999, cigarettes were taxed at 2.65 cents. It’s really important to understand that increasing the tax rate from 2.65 cents to 12.35 cents has simply meant that there has been a huge increase in the issue of illegal tobacco. “The increased incentive for tobacco smuggling notwithstanding, we found that the ministry’s systems and procedures for collecting tobacco taxes have not significantly changed or improved since the time of our last audit in 2001,” the auditor concludes.

I think it’s terribly important to look at this because we had exactly the same thing happen in a previous cycle of increasing the tax on tobacco. People are willing to pay a certain level of tax, and after that, they seek illegal means. So what we are looking at today, then, is this enormous business in illegal cigarettes. The question, then, of these illegal cigarettes has in itself not only the fact that you don’t have the appropriate revenue coming into the government, but it also creates many other issues. I want to look at two in particular, and one of them comes from my colleague the member from

Haldimand–Norfolk. His remarks I think are worth repeating here because of the fact that this is such a huge issue in his riding, as well as mine.

“Because of high taxes on tobacco and virtually no enforcement”—as we know from the Auditor General’s comments—“as much as 40% of the tobacco now smoked in Ontario is illicit.

“Cigarettes are being sold for pocket money out of the trunks of cars, and at smoke shacks....

“Why would a smoker pay \$50 to \$70 for a legal carton of cigarettes when they can easily purchase the same number ... for between \$6 and \$20?

“Irony isn’t it, that government’s own high-tax public health policies have spawned the illegal trade.

“A 2006 study commissioned by the industry shows an annual decline in tobacco of about 2%.

“And while the McGuinty government may tout their tobacco policies as curbing smoking habits, surveys show 75% of this decline is simply a transfer to the illegal trade.

1710

“The illegal trade has disastrous social and economic consequences.

“It not only brings to communities cheap smokes but also drugs, firearms, alcohol and a growing disrespect for the law.

“Many view the illegal trade as inconsequential—an activity that only hurts ‘Big Tobacco’ and ‘Big government.’

“While it is true that legal manufacturers and retailers are losing big money, Canadian taxpayers are also being defrauded to the tune of billions each year....

“Federally, we have seen the announcement of a multi-department task force to combat illegal tobacco across the country....

“There is no easy solution to this problem; however, in the 1990s, cutting tobacco taxes shut down hundreds of illegal smoke operations overnight.

“This May, Benjamin Kemball, of the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers’ Council, testified before the federal government’s Standing Committee on Public Safety.

“Mr. Kemball presented very reasonable measures that could help prevent the illegal industry from spiralling.

“Aside from enforcement, Mr. Kemball suggested that the supply of specific machinery and materials associated with the manufacturing of tobacco products be closely monitored and controlled.

“He said that the federal government has allegedly issued more than 20 tobacco manufacturing licences—but do not follow up with routine inspections.

“Tobacco companies, he said, can also play a pivotal role by working with suppliers to the industry to ensure policies like ‘know your customer’ apply.”

But I want to also talk about how important it is to people in my riding. I’m going to read excerpts from a letter that I received from one of my constituents.

“I am an owner of a family business in Ontario. Like all other sectors of the economy, our business is not as good as it once was.... the problem of illegal tobacco is

out of control and growing in Ontario. It now accounts for 48.6% of the tobacco purchased in the province. This problem is not only a tobacco issue; it is now a societal issue that we should all be deeply concerned about. Convenience stores like mine are losing \$50,000 to \$100,000 in sales because of illegal tobacco. We are also losing sales of items that smokers used to buy when they came in for cigarettes.

"The Ontario government alone is losing \$1 billion from these untaxed and unregulated products and all of your government's anti-smoking measures are being undermined. Further, according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, over 100 criminal organizations are involved in the trade of illegal tobacco, using the proceeds to fund other criminal activity such as drugs and illegal guns. Kids can buy these cigarettes because the average price of a carton of illegal cigarettes is \$10 ... and criminals do not ask for identification like we do in my store."

He goes on to talk about how difficult it is to make a living, saying that the lack of action on the part of this government on the illegal tobacco file is rewarding criminal activity and punishing him as a law-abiding business person. I think that when we are discussing this bill, we have to be discussing it in the context of these individuals. We have to look at the fact that lawsuits drag on for years. What we have today are on-the-ground problems that require the appropriate political will. These on-the-ground problems are things like—the Auditor General has provided us with information on how to deal with them. So I think that while, as others have mentioned, we support the initiative of this bill, this is a long-term thing—lots of lawyers, years before there is a decision made. We have an urgent problem with the use of illegal tobacco. As my constituent says, it will simply undo the work of the legislation. It won't matter that there is a law about smoking in your car with your children. It won't matter that the legal operators ask for age ID. None of those things will matter as long as you allow this cancer to continue in our society.

What is really required is the political will to look at these on-the-ground issues and take action now and not wait for years to come, with the possibility of the lawsuit concluding in an appropriate way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened with interest to the member for York-Simcoe. Certainly, I remember the day when I had to clean out ashtrays at my parents' place. I think that's why I never took up smoking. And I certainly remember the day when smoking was de rigueur in public places. In fact, you were considered kind of a fuddy-duddy if you told guests who came to your own home, "Sorry, we don't allow smoking here." I do remember it well.

She's absolutely right about small business and the corner store and their complaints about the seeming double standard of this government to hold them to all sorts of stringent rules and regulations, many of which cost them money, and then turn a blind eye to illegal and

counterfeit manufacturing of cigarettes, particularly when that's a huge market, when it's taking almost half of the market for the sale of cigarettes. One could only imagine what this would be like if we used alcohol, if bootleggers were allowed to run rampant despite the existence of the LCBO. One has to wonder why the government has not cracked down and done something. Really, that's a matter for the Attorney General.

And she's quite right. None of anything we do in this House matters unless it's enforced. Here we have a blatant case where there is a law that is not being enforced and that puts the lie to any possible legislation.

I listened intently and with interest. It's always refreshing to hear someone stand and read letters from their constituents, because, after all, those are the people we serve. Certainly, small business needs all the help it can get right now. So thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just wanted to pay respect to the member for York-Simcoe. I know how badly she wanted to speak on the bill, and she certainly has done that.

Two points she made are really worth repeating, and to reinforce that I was indeed listening. The Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association has really been put through the wringer on this. I'm not trying to be harsh here in the dying moments of the debate, but the fact is, during this whole debate earlier on, they were made to have the power walls and spent thousands of dollars.

These people work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I think of Paul next door to my constituency office; I think it's a Kwik-E-Mart or something like that. His wife and his son work all the time. I don't see anybody else working there. They've done all this stuff. Then I think of Joseph and Mary Park at the store in Janetville. These are hard-working, industrious and committed people and they had the rules changed on them. Yet, at the same time, down the road, if you will, there is somebody selling contraband cigarettes out of the trunk of a car. They're not even being—for political correctness, the police are kind of circumventing, not enforcing these things.

So this is what is discouraging about wanting to do the right thing but not doing the right thing right. Really, it comes down to that.

The other provision, of course, is the Limitations Act, which kind of exempts the government in its pursuit of justice. It permits an action for damages—the cost of health care benefits, alleged to have been caused or contributed to by wrongdoing in the time before sanctions. In fact, they did not knowingly—I think at some point in time you could say—do this, because most of the people were of free choice in doing it. Now I guess it's an addictive substance.

I think we support it. Too little, too late—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

The member for York-Simcoe, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the members from Parkdale–High Park and Durham.

There are two things that I'd particularly like to comment on.

When the member from Parkdale–High Park talked about the double standard, I think that's a very important recognition. On the one hand, there's a sort of high level of "Here's all this wonderful legislation that has been put forward"; and at the same time, we have a blind eye to a very, very active illegal activity that is worth billions of dollars, and we're not dealing with that. And then, equally, there are the victims of our not dealing with it. On the one side are those who are in legitimate business, dealing with more and more of a regulatory burden, not only as a burden but as an investment, as a cost to do business; and then we have our young people, who are supposedly our prime targets for changing and not getting them hooked on cigarettes, who are the perfect target for the illegal activity of selling.

So I just think that it's really important to see, as I say, that at the government level, there are two standards, and then there are two sets of victims because of those double standards. At the same time, we're all supposed to sit

around and wait for a lawsuit that could be years and years away. I think it's urgent right now to change this double standard and help the victims, both the legal shop owners and the kids who are buying cheap cigarettes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Bentley has moved second reading of Bill 155. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): So ordered. Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday, April 23.

The House adjourned at 1723.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakubuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mme France Gélinas	6191
Mr. Reza Moridi.....	6191
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6191

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Groves Memorial Community Hospital	
Mr. Ted Arnott	6192
Richard Patten	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	6192
Volunteers	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6192
Taxation	
Mr. Michael Prue	6192
St. Peter Players	
Mr. Phil McNeely	6193
Education	
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6193
Northern Ontario heritage fund	
Mr. David Oraziatti	6193
Bilaal Rajan	
Mr. Reza Moridi.....	6193
Government investments	
Mr. Monte Kwinter	6194

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills	
Mr. Michael Prue	6194
Report adopted	6194

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Criminal Record Checks for Volunteers Act, 2009, Bill 170, Ms. Jones / Loi de 2009 sur les vérifications du casier judiciaire des bénévoles, projet de loi 170, Mme Jones	
First reading agreed to.....	6194
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6194

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6194
Motion agreed to	6194

Private members' public business	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6195

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Aboriginal children's services	
Hon. Brad Duguid	6195
Earth Day	
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6196
Aboriginal children's services	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	6196
Earth Day	
Mr. Toby Barrett	6197
Aboriginal children's services	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6197
Earth Day	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6198

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hospital funding	
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	6198
Child custody	
Mr. Kim Craiton	6198
Pension plans	
Mr. John O'Toole	6199
Air quality	
Mr. Charles Sousa	6199
School funding	
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	6199
Protection of minors	
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	6199
Cemeteries	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6200
Hospital funding	
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	6200
Cemeteries	
Mr. Jim Brownell	6200
Hospital funding	
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	6200
Lupus	
Mr. Bob Delaney	6200
Taxation	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6201

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, 2009, Bill 155, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2009 sur le recouvrement du montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé imputables au tabac, projet de loi 155, M. Bentley

Mr. Rosario Marchese	6201
Mr. Rick Johnson.....	6204
Mr. John O'Toole	6204
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6204
Mr. Mike Colle	6204
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6205
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6205
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	6208
Mr. John O'Toole	6208
Mr. Reza Moridi	6208
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6209
Mrs. Julia Munro	6209
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6211
Mr. John O'Toole	6211
Mrs. Julia Munro	6212
Second reading agreed to.....	6212

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 22 April 2009 / Mercredi 22 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Budget Measures Act, 2009, Bill 162, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2009 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 162, M. Duncan	
Second reading vote deferred.....	6171
Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, 2009, Bill 118, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2009 visant à combattre la conduite inattentive et à promouvoir les transports écologiques, projet de loi 118, M. Bradley	
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	6171
Mrs. Linda Jeffrey.....	6173
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6174
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6174
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	6175
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6175
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6178
Mrs. Linda Jeffrey.....	6179
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	6179
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6179
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6180
Third reading agreed to.....	6181

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Margaret R. Best.....	6181
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6181

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario economy	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	6181
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6181
Taxation	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	6182
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6182
Provincial purchasing policy	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6182
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6182
Energy rates	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6183
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6183
Environmental protection	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6184
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6184

Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6184
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6184

Nuclear energy

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6185
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6185

Sports funding

Mr. Charles Sousa.....	6185
Hon. Margaret R. Best.....	6185

Pension plans

Mr. Norman W. Sterling.....	6186
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6186

Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6186
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6187

Organ donation

Mr. Bruce Crozier.....	6187
Hon. David Caplan.....	6187

Education funding

Mrs. Joyce Savoline.....	6187
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	6188

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6188
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6188

Municipalities

Mrs. Liz Sandals.....	6189
Hon. Jim Watson.....	6189

Aboriginal land dispute

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	6189
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6189

Education funding

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	6190
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	6190

University and college funding

Mr. Jim Brownell.....	6190
Hon. John Milloy.....	6190

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Budget Measures Act, 2009, Bill 162, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2009 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 162, M. Duncan	
Second reading agreed to.....	6191

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N

XI

-D23



Government
Publication

No. 139

N° 139

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 23 April 2009

Jeudi 23 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Mr. Fonseca moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing some of my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West.

I'm very proud to be able to participate here and to discuss some of the measures that we're bringing forward with Bill 139. This bill would amend the Employment Standards Act to enhance protections for employees working through temporary help agencies. Our intention is to strengthen the Employment Standards Act and to ensure that assignment employees working through temporary help agencies are treated fairly.

I want to commend the standing committee for the work that they did in completing public hearings and clause-by-clause review of the bill. The committee heard from 62 presenters, who provided insightful comments on our legislation. As well, last May we consulted with 19 stakeholder organizations representing employees and employers, and we received another 120 written submissions.

Our consultation dealt with issues that had been brought to our attention by individuals and groups, as well as through employment standards inspections and investigations. We covered five main topics: (1) the elect-to-work exemption in the Employment Standards Act; (2)

barriers to permanent employment faced by temporary help agency employees; (3) fees charged to workers by temporary help agencies; (4) the liability for Employment Standards Act violations; and (5) information given to temporary agency employees about their assignments.

I know that all of us here in this chamber have a long work history, and I look to retrace my work history, and I date it back about 25 years ago. As a teenager, I was looking for a job in the summer. As you know, teenagers want jobs so they can purchase some of the things that they would like to have in their lives. It could have been—I think at the end of the day it was a Sony Walkman; today it may be an iPod. Well, I saw an ad for jobs where you could make as much as \$20 an hour. I called up this organization, and they said, "Come on in." I went down for a meeting at their office, and when I came into the office they said, "Oh, sure, we're going to be putting you with a company where you're going to be able to make up to \$20 an hour." I thought, "Wow!" Back in the 1980s, this was big dollars, \$20 an hour. I thought, "Okay, this is great." So the next day I was off to this company. They gave me a little slip of paper: "Here's where you have to go." They didn't tell me much about what I'd be doing. They said, "You'll be making some calls."

I showed up at this company and I guess that was my first experience working through a temp help agency. I didn't even think of it as a temp help agency, but that's how it worked: I saw the ad, made the call and went to that organization, which would be considered a temp help agency. They sent me to what is called a client-employer, where I was going to do that work. I arrived at that job and went down a number of stairs into a basement where they had set up a call centre. It was a telemarketing job. I got in there and there was little orientation, little training, little supervision. They put me down at a desk and linked me up with a buddy. This young woman sat with me for about 30 minutes: "Here's how you've got to make the calls." I'm not going to tell you what I was selling out there, because I don't want to hurt the reputation of a large company that had employed this call centre to make calls for them to sell their product, but what I can tell you is that it was a horrific experience.

Nobody in that room made more than minimum wage—nobody. I am sure of this. When they talk about making \$20 or \$30 or \$50 an hour and you see some of these ads, they are—well, I'm not going to use the word, but I can tell you that those ads are somewhat misleading to potential employees.

So I got in there and started making these calls, and I'm being hollered at by this individual who was, I guess, if you want to call him that, a manager of this call centre: "You got to make more calls; you never can take no for an answer. You've got to sell, sell, sell." Anyway, I put up with this. And about that individual, I felt that there was a case to be made there around violence and harassment. I'm delighted also that in this chamber, just the other day, we proposed legislation to deal with violence and harassment in the workplace. That is very important, because I'm sure that this individual—today there would be a lot of calls coming in to my office at the Ministry of Labour about the types of practices that he was using to, as he would call it, motivate employees to do this work.

I lasted almost three days. Every day I said, "You know what? I can't do this. This is crazy, the type of environment that people are working under in this call centre." But as a young worker—I wouldn't call myself a vulnerable worker but a young worker—who was looking to make some money to be able to buy some of those things like the Sony Walkman or a pair of sneakers, or whatever it might be, I put up with it. By the third day, I said, "This is just unacceptable," and I walked away. I called up the office that had sent me to this client business and said, "Will I get paid?" They said, "That's your problem, and you shouldn't have walked away. You should have finished the job. And no, you're probably not going to get paid."

I didn't do anything about it. I didn't know what my employment standards rights were. I just chalked it up to an experience that I did not want to go through again. And I am delighted that I am in this position today and have the privilege to be able to stamp out these types of practices and help those vulnerable workers, those employees who are out there looking to find a job—sometimes their first job. Many of these employees are new Canadians just arrived here in Canada who don't know their rights, don't know that these types of practices are completely unacceptable and don't know where or who to call—where to get help. Bill 139, if passed, will change that for the better; it will bring accountability and transparency to the sector.

0910

I also want to say that I have met with many, many great temporary help agencies that are doing all the right things. They are addressing employees' rights. They are ensuring that the workplaces that they are sent to are healthy, safe, clean, are holding to high standards. For all of them, this legislation would help in terms of levelling the playing field and weeding out those unscrupulous organizations out there that are deceiving employees, that are not treating Ontarian workers the way that we would like them to be treated.

As I said, the five main points that this legislation, if passed, would address—let's go back into what happened with my work experience through a temporary help agency 25 years ago. It will be completely different if Bill 139 is passed, because here's what would have happened. Let's rewind again.

I would have called this organization and would have gone in. They would have told me about the type of employment that I would be going to and the type of job that I would be going to. With this legislation, they would be mandated now to provide me information. I would have to know everything about the organization that I called—the temp help agency. They would have to provide me with the information of the client employer, where I was going to be going to work. When I say "the information," that's the address, the corporate name, the phone number, the person who is in charge there, all the information that any employee should have.

They would also provide me with hours of work, description of work and, if possible, the length of my employment, the length of the contract—would I be working there for a week or would I be working there for three months? In some instances, it's not always possible, because it depends really on that business, and, depending on how busy they are, they may need you for a few days or they may need you for a few months. Sometimes they are unsure. But all that other information would have been provided.

Along with that information that would be provided to the worker that's working through a temporary help agency would be their rights in this province of Ontario, their employment standards rights. So I would have had that card. I would have gone to this employer. I would have seen right away that maybe the health and safety standards were not really up to scratch here. I would also have been able to address what was in my contract. If my contract said I'd be making so much per hour, I'd want to make sure that I was making that amount per hour.

There are things like the training that I would be receiving around health and safety, and information—when I left that job and walked away from three days of work, probably the hardest work I've ever had to do because of the circumstances—that company got my services for three days for free—for free.

Today, on that information card, I would have the number of the employment standards claims office. I would have picked up the phone and made a call, and I would have said, "I've done this job. Here's who sent me over there. I've not been paid for those three days of work." That claim would go in, and officers from employment standards would start to investigate and be able to try to recoup those funds.

I can tell you that millions and millions of hard-earned dollars by Ontario workers have been left behind this way, because employees don't know their rights and feel they don't have any other recourse. They don't want to stay in that employment, they walk and they leave that money to that employer, and that is absolutely wrong.

I want to thank my predecessor, Brad Duguid, from the riding of Scarborough Centre. When he was Minister of Labour, he helped modernize our employment standards in this province. One of the reasons that people were also walking away was that they had to fill out all these applications and forms to be able to make a claim, and sometimes people thought, "Well, for \$50 or \$100 or

even a few hundred dollars, I'm not going to do it," or "I don't know how to do it," or "English is not my first language; it's too difficult, too cumbersome." Through my predecessor's work, there has been a modernization of the employment standards claim office and the way we address those claims in the province of Ontario.

Today, you can go onto a website, 24/7, and make that claim very easily in the comfort of your home or at a library or wherever you have access to a computer. That will help, and we know it has helped, because the number of claims we got, once that online service was available, just jumped by thousands. It's actually something we are addressing, because we didn't know how popular or how much the service would be accessed. But I can tell you that it has been a tremendous success. Because of that, we have hired more employment standards officers to deal with those claims.

What we, in this chamber, can all be proud of is that those employees who would have walked away—because we know we weren't getting those many thousands of claims—are now able to recoup those hard-earned dollars. I think that's very important. It will make a big difference in their lives. So these are some of the changes.

Another one that, in my experience, was not really impacted—I wasn't looking for permanent employment; I was looking for a summer job—is around barriers to permanent employment. One thing, in the extensive consultations we had, speaking with employees and advocacy groups that are working on behalf of employees who work through temporary help agencies—is that they were feeling, and rightfully so, that they could never, ever secure permanent employment because they were being bound by contracts between the temporary help agency and the client's employer.

How these contracts work is that the temporary help agency makes a contract with ABC corporation, and within that contract they say, "Whatever employees we're sending you, if you one day decide to hire that employee, you're going to have to pay us so many hundreds or thousands of dollars to retain that employee as one of your permanent employees." Many organizations saw this as a barrier, and they weren't employing these terrific employees, even if they wanted to; they thought it was somewhat cost-prohibitive. And the employees also saw that as a barrier for them to make that jump to where there may be a perfect fit between that individual and that company.

Once an employee who is working through a temporary help agency starts with a company, from day one they may do a couple of days of work or they may do many, many months or years of work with that organization. They are now able, after six months, to become a permanent employee, and that corporation, that company—small, medium or large—has no contractual obligation to pay the temporary help agency any more dollars. That is one of the barriers that will be taken away if this legislation passes here in this chamber—getting rid of that barrier. We want to see people in meaningful employment. We want to see workers across Ontario in per-

manent employment. We know it's good for helping strengthen and build our communities. It's good for family. When it's a permanent job, it's the type of job that gives people that security to be able to invest in the community, buy a residence, a house, and have some roots. We saw that as very important.

0920

There was another issue that I found very, very alarming that came up, and I'm so delighted that this did not happen to me. Looking back 25 years ago, I could have been vulnerable to this. It is where a temporary help agency puts up an ad, calls you in—lures you in—saying, "You're going to be able to make \$20 an hour," or "You're going to make \$1,000 a week." Well, for somebody who's a vulnerable employee or someone who's a vulnerable citizen, someone who is looking for any kind of work, or a student or a young worker who is thinking, "Wow, that much money, and I really need the job"—but then they bring you in and say, "Yeah, we are going to get you that job, but what you're going to have to do is, there is an upfront fee" of \$500 or \$100, or whatever the fee is, for that temporary help agency to go find you a job, to get you that job. You have to pay to work. I think this is unacceptable. That practice would also be prohibited if Bill 139 were to pass in this chamber—another good thing that would help those workers that are working through temporary help agencies.

We've really brought a balanced approach to this, because we have worked closely with employees that have shared their stories and advocacy groups but we've also worked closely with ACSESS, which is an organization that represents many of the temporary help agencies. I think I've said in the chamber that I've spent more time with ACSESS than with pretty much all of the stakeholders that I have in labour. We spent many hours at the boardroom table at the Ministry of Labour discussing many of these issues so that we could bring forward that right, balanced approach, so we could get this right. As I said, there are many, many temporary help agencies that are doing the right thing. They are upholding high standards. They are providing information today to their employees. When they're working with a company, they go in and check that company out and make sure that their standards—where that employee is being sent—are also of a high level. With them we can level this playing field in Ontario. We can weed out the types of companies that are now using these poor practices that are preying on vulnerable workers. We heard much of this through our committee hearings.

There were a number of amendments made. One was purely technical in nature, and was to clarify our intent that temporary help agency employees are afforded the same rights as other, regular employees. We put forward an amendment that would allow a temp agency to provide information on assignment orally.

I talked about what information they would get and I held my hands out like it would be a card or a paper information. Well, it will be. But what happens is, if you're working through one of these agencies, I under-

stand the temporary help agency would make a call to your home and say, "You're going to a particular company." They may not be able to get you all that information on a card in a timely fashion because you may be off right the next morning. They can provide that information orally first over the phone or through an e-mail or whatever, and then they can get you the information in short order so that you do have that card and you have all of the information that you need about that employer, the description of your work, the hours of work, etc., as I'd mentioned.

Another amendment came up, and this one deals with termination and severance. When we first introduced Bill 139, it contained a section which stated that if a temp agency employee did not receive an assignment in a 35-week period, that the employee would be considered terminated. Well, during public hearings we heard that the 35-week period would have a negative effect on temporary help agency employees, and our intent has always been to treat temporary help agency employees exactly the same way that all other employees are treated in the province of Ontario. So as a result, we've amended Bill 139 to reflect the deemed termination periods in the Employment Standards Act. If Bill 139 should pass, temp agency employees who have not had an assignment in 13 weeks out of 20 would be considered to be terminated. They would then be entitled to either notice of termination or termination pay and severance pay, if it is applicable. This is the same rule as for all other employees. These are the main amendments that were put forward during committee, and those amendments really touch on the value and the principle of fairness.

When we look at legislation at the Ministry of Labour, we always look at it through a number of lenses. One is fairness, and the others are health and safety for our workers, so this is the right approach. It is a fair approach and it treats those workers who are working through temporary help agencies the same as all other workers in Ontario.

One thing I failed to mention also is, in a regulation that we changed back on January 2 of this year—and prior to changing this regulation, there was something called "elect to work." What happens with "elect to work"—and we heard from many, many employees who worked with the temp help agencies and we asked, "How long have you been working with them?" "Well, you know, I have been working with them for five years. I have been with them for one year. I've been with them in all my employment here in this country. For the last seven years I've been working through temporary help agencies." Well, for those seven years, or five or one or a number of months, that individual was not entitled to public holiday pay because of something called "elect to work."

We asked, "Do you really have the right to say, 'No, I don't want to take that assignment. I don't want to take that job' when your temporary help agency calls?" And I guess they do have the right to say no. But guess what? If you say no—I don't know if it's once or twice, but if you

say no, because maybe you're sick, or because they call you at the last minute and you can't find child care, or you can't work things out with the family and other commitments that you have, you try to keep saying no, and what they say is, "That's it. You're not getting any more calls," and that job is pretty much terminated. That's happening quite a bit out there. So you keep saying yes. Really, you're working consistently for these temporary help agencies. You're working for many—they've told us, "I've been working with them for one year, five years, seven years, and never received holiday pay—ever," whereas their co-workers and others in society are receiving holiday pay. Well, that changed on January 2, 2009. These workers now will receive their due holiday pay, and that is something we should also be proud of, if this legislation passes.

0930

We don't want second-class citizens in Ontario. They work hard. They work consistently. They were being deemed "elect to work." We know, that in the vast majority of cases, that was not what was really happening because they felt compelled to go to work or not get any future work. That has been changed in terms of the elect-to-work provision.

Let's look at this piece of legislation not in isolation but as part of our poverty reduction strategy. I want to thank my colleagues, and in particular the Minister of Children and Youth Services for her support, her advocacy, her hard work and for the messages she has brought to me with her consultations on poverty reduction in the province of Ontario. She heard from many of those who are in poverty and working through temporary help agencies how Bill 139 would help them and their families a great deal in addressing their situation.

As part of the poverty reduction strategy, these changes through Bill 139 would provide enhanced opportunities for these workers. They would be able to give many of these workers hope. That is the type of Ontario I think all of us want to see, one where we work together, where there is a level playing field, where there is fairness. We're helping employees who have low incomes find security.

Can you imagine how stressful it must be for somebody who has worked for seven years jumping from job to job to job through a temporary help agency, never being able to find that permanent employment? When I say "difficult," not just difficult physically and financially, but difficult emotionally; the stress on an individual who doesn't know where they may be after three weeks of employment, who doesn't know if they will have a job after that. Even if they've had such a wonderful work experience with an employer, that employer, having a contract with an agency that maybe prohibits them, because of the financial constraints, hiring that person permanently—these changes will make a world of difference to an individual like that, a vulnerable worker. That individual will also make a difference to our communities and the type of communities that we're trying to build in this province.

I want to say that since 2003 at the Ministry of Labour, I, with my predecessors, under the leadership of the Premier, our government and our caucus all working hand in hand—we've done a lot to modernize labour standards in the province of Ontario. We have done that always looking out for the welfare of our workers because they build this province. They are the ones we work for. They are the ones who pay taxes. They are the ones we have the honour and privilege of being here for, to be able to provide those health care services, educational opportunities and quality of life in all parts of this magnificent province that we live in.

That modernization has been one where we have, today, the best labour relations that we've had in 30 years, where we have made numerous amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act to address health and safety in the workplace—there is legislation that is going through the House right now that, as I mentioned, was just introduced this week to address violence and harassment in the workplace, another initiative that will help in terms of creating the environment, the climate that we want to see in our workplaces.

The employment standards I mentioned in terms of the modernization of the employment standards: We always try first to work through awareness, education, information, working in partnership with employers, employees, trade unions and labour, all working together because we understand that we are all in this together in what we're trying to build here in Ontario, which is a place where people can have opportunity, be able to hope and dream and see a better life for themselves and their children, and strengthen their community. That's why, with that work, because we've worked in partnership—we've worked together; we've worked as a team—we have those types of labour relations here in this province that we haven't seen in 30 long years. Because of that hard work, we've been able to modernize labour standards when it comes to occupational health and safety, when it comes to employment standards to safeguard our employees, and ensure that they understand what their rights are as employees—and employers also, so that they know what their responsibilities are.

But we do that always through consultation, through listening to all stakeholders, making sure that we have the right approach and that we get it right, because what we are safeguarding is our most precious resource in this province, and that's our people. We want to ensure that when millions of Ontarians leave their homes every day, shut their doors and go to work, whatever work that may be—it may be in health care, manufacturing, education or construction—they come home safe and sound. That is something that sits with me every minute of every hour of every day. The privilege that we have to be able to protect millions of people is second to none, and they deserve that. They deserve that because they work very hard, they pay their taxes, and we want to have them continue to work and be productive. But the best way that we can be productive in this province is to stay healthy and to be safe.

I can tell you, the hardest thing about being in this job as Minister of Labour—the hardest thing that I've had to experience has been with my BlackBerry. Predecessors of mine would know this and others may know this, but as Minister of Labour, whenever there is a fatality in this province, when a worker is killed, automatically I get a BlackBerry message. Those are the most difficult messages to read. They are messages of tragedy, messages that you know will impact the family and friends of the individual and the community forever. They will be impacted forever. Last year, there were 100 of those messages that came in to Ministry of Labour BlackBerries. This past year, that number has dropped. It has come down to 78, which is good. That's a positive trend. But in my opinion—and, I'm sure, in the opinion of everybody in this House—not one message should come in. Not one is acceptable. What is the number? Is it 50, is it 30, is it 20, is it 100? It shouldn't be one; it should be zero. The number should be zero.

0940

That's why we take this very seriously. We want to make sure that our young workers, inexperienced workers and veterans are safe and healthy in their workplaces—and there are some very dangerous workplaces out there. We understand that. We have people who work in construction, mining, health care or education. It really doesn't matter where you work. Every place has risks, and what we say is that those risks have to be assessed and best practices put into place so that we don't continually hear about individuals who have been killed or injured in the workplace.

We have much more work to do, and we will continue to do that work. We'll roll up our sleeves. There are some out there that do not want to implement those best practices, and that's why we've increased the number of inspectors at the Ministry of Labour. Those inspectors go out, first, always to work with employers, with education, with best practices, working through our health and safety associations that have a sectoral approach and can help that employer in whatever sector it may be. That's what we're there to do—to help. But when that work is not done and we find that there is equipment that is unsafe, when we find that there are business practices that are putting workers at risk, that's when our inspectors have to do a job of issuing orders, making sure that change is going to take place in that workplace, so that individuals are safeguarded. That is the right thing to do if we want to build a province that is one of fairness, one that has the values of compassion, one that understands that our people are the number one reason we are here in this chamber and why we work as hard as we can to ensure their health and safety.

I want to commend the 430 inspectors who are out there working on behalf of the Ministry of Labour across this province for the work they do with employers and on behalf of all Ontario workers to make sure that there are safeguards in place so that the millions of hard-working Ontarians go home to their families safe and sound each and every day.

By having all the members in this chamber support Bill 139, we will be helping the many thousands—actually, millions—of workers who do temporary employment; I understand it's 11% of our workforce. We will be helping those millions of employees in order to give them hope, to safeguard them, to ensure that they are not treated as second-class workers, to make sure that barriers that are before them today are taken away, to let them know that they are part of a province that believes in fairness and that they are being treated with dignity and respect.

On that note, I want to thank all the members in this chamber, those who were at committee and all those who may be watching today—the advocacy groups, the employers we met with and the associations—for their hard work on this piece of legislation. If it passes, we can all be very proud that we're building the type of province that we want. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Before I go on to the next speaker, I will stop the clock and take a moment to welcome to Queen's Park Mr. Larry O'Connor, who served as the MPP from Durham–York in the 35th Parliament and is now the mayor of Brock.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm proud to speak on Bill 139, a bill that would enhance Employment Standards Act protections for temporary help agencies. I hope our government can count on all members' support, as it affects some of the most vulnerable in our society: women, new immigrants and visible minorities.

The standing committee has now completed its public hearings and clause-by-clause review of the bill. I had the privilege of participating in this committee. We heard from a number of delegations. I'm now satisfied that our bill provides a balanced and fair approach to the needs of employees in the temporary help agency sector.

Two years ago, I introduced a private member's bill on this issue. I am very proud to have led the consultations on this issue as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, and I'm proud that our government has taken up the cause of these vulnerable workers. They are excessively represented in the lowest-paying and most insecure forms of work. I believe that Bill 139 would help provide much-needed oversight in this industry.

Bill 139 would remove some barriers to permanent employment that are impossible for employees of temporary agencies to overcome. Agencies would not be able to prevent a temporary employee from taking a permanent job with a client. Agencies would not be able to charge temporary-to-permanent fees to a client after six months or more have passed since the employee was first assigned to the client. They would never be able to charge the employee a temporary-to-permanent fee.

Bill 139 would also put an end to the unscrupulous practice of charging people a fee just to be considered for an assignment. It would prohibit charging fees for such items as resumé preparation and job interview preparation. People being charged these fees are frequently at

the end of their tether and desperate for work. They should not be forced to decide between feeding their kids and getting a job—not in Ontario.

The bill would also strengthen employment standards protections for temp agency employees. Sometimes, vulnerable workers won't make complaints because they're afraid of repercussions if they do so. Bill 139 would prohibit client agencies from engaging in reprisals against assignment employees for asserting their rights. The agency, as the employer, would continue to be prohibited from reprisals against employees.

I have heard many stories of people not being able to get wages owed to them after they have worked for a temp agency. Under Bill 139, the Ministry of Labour could require the client of an agency to give monies it owes the agency to the ministry if an employee has not been paid. The ministry would, in turn, give the employee the wages he or she is owed. This may make it easier for them to get the money owed if the agency fails to pay.

I have been involved with this issue for a number of years. I have received many complaints of fraudulent, fly-by-night employment agencies and I've heard endless horror stories as a result of the questionable practices of fly-by-night, fraudulent employment agencies.

0950

This bill would level the playing field for agencies that obey the law and have practices that are fair to employees. We have to protect people who face tremendous barriers to exercising their rights. Bill 139 would go a long way to help ensure that temp agency workers enjoy the same protections as other regular workers. These are important changes to the Employment Standards Act. These changes are one of the first steps our government is taking in its poverty reduction strategy. These are changes that would help some of the most vulnerable workers in our province, workers with little employment security and low incomes. They, like everyone else in our province, deserve dignity and respect. I fully support Bill 139 and I urge all members to support this legislation so that it can become law and those who have turned to us for help will receive it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's interesting listening. I want to pick out one line from what the minister had to say, and that is something that we can all agree on, which is that the most important asset that we have in Ontario is our people. That's absolutely true; I don't think anybody from any side of this House would have any disagreement with that. So I don't understand why it is that we keep debating legislation that, given the framework of the times, stands to hurt so many people.

I have spoken to stakeholders, particularly in my own riding of Thornhill, who are involved in the temporary agency business, and what I'm hearing is that temporary agencies, at this point, are doing land office business for one primary reason and that is that the disappearance of

so many permanent jobs in Ontario has put people in a position where they have no alternative but to go to temporary agencies to find ways to feed their families. The concern that I have about Bill 139 and that I'm hearing from the temporary agency community is that in implementing the kinds of standards that are being discussed, forcing accounting and accrual mechanisms to be put into the temporary agency framework that are not there now, will result in temporary agency work—three-month contracts, that kind of thing—out of the province. These contracts will go to other provinces or they will go to the United States. Given the time, I could provide individual examples, and probably will in debate, the point being that in trying to address that issue of the most important asset in our province being its people, you have to take into account what you're trying to do and when you're trying to do it. I think that Bill 139 needs a very good look at the committee level and a real review before it's enacted, because it may actually hurt the people it sets out to help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too listened with interest to what the Minister of Labour had to say, as well as the member from Brampton West. Bill 139 talks about temporary agencies. Some of the comments made by the minister really apply to temporary workers. Only some temporary workers are really placed by an agency. A lot of organizations, agencies and employers out there have and continue to have temporary workers. This bill will do nothing to prevent them from being treated, using the words of the minister, as "second-class citizens."

The bill has made some steps forward to prevent all sorts of exploitation of people by temporary agencies—we talked about the fees, the back pay, the severance—but it also leaves huge gaps that would allow temporary agencies who place full-time workers to basically shift what they're doing to avoid being covered by this law. At the core of it is that when we talk about the millions of people in precarious employment, the people placed by temporary agencies are only a small part of the millions of people in Ontario who work in precarious employment and for which this bill will do nothing. So we will continue to have what the minister is trying to avoid: millions of people who will be treated as second-class citizens because they will continue to be temporary workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would like to thank the Minister of Labour, the member from Brampton West, the member from Thornhill and the member from Nickel Belt for their comments on the bill, in particular the Minister of Labour for his compassionate comments and the history that he provided of his own experiences going through this.

I was fortunate to be able to sit in on one of the public hearing sessions two weeks ago. We heard from many people involved in the temporary employment side of things and some of the issues that they have had to deal with.

I think we all have to agree that the temporary agencies provide a valuable service, especially in these times of economic challenge when so many people are searching for employment. Many of our young people rely on temporary agencies right now to get their foot in the door, and it provides them with job experiences.

But we have to protect our most vulnerable workers to make sure they've got the protection in place so that they can get the experience and not be mistreated in the workplace. With this bill we are making sure that they are not unfairly prevented from accessing permanent jobs, by removing a lot of the barriers that they face at this point in time: prohibiting temporary agencies from charging fees to workers for such things as resumé writing and interview preparation. My own daughter has experienced this herself, and it's not right that you should have to pay for any kind of service like this when you're getting a job. If temporary workers have done a good job in their temporary placement and they've now come to the end of the term, if there are fees charged that would prevent them from gaining permanent work at this point, it's unfair.

I believe that this act, although any piece of legislation may not be perfect, definitely makes steps in the right direction, and I support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd first like to recognize the Minister of Labour's remarks on this temporary employment agency bill. More importantly, because the Minister of Labour is here, I'd like to recognize all of the retirees from General Motors who are here to watch the Minister of Labour really also explain to them how come there are no jobs.

We are talking about temporary jobs; we're lucky to have a job in this province today, and this bill does not do exactly what it says. If you look at section 74.2, if I read it, I think the member from Nickel Belt had it right. This part of the bill "does not apply in relation to an individual who is an assignment employee assigned to provide professional services, personal support services or home-making services as defined in the Long-Term Care Act, 1994 if the assignment is made under a contract." So there are exemptions in the bill. Let's be honest with the people of Ontario: The exemptions are government employees, basically. You are the one that actually is the employer in long-term care and CCACs. Yes, you are. If you don't know, you should know, and if you don't know, you shouldn't be the Minister of Labour.

That being said, I am for fairness with employees including, on this side, fairness in contract relationships with employees. Those contracts were made in good faith. Some do want temporary work and some are facilitated by a contract agency—often, indeed, nurses who don't want to work certain periods of the year or certain times of the day, or they want certain types of work. Maybe these agencies can do a decent job. But I think people should be covered by the Employment Standards Act. I don't think there should be any exemption for that.

This afternoon we are going to be having questions directed at the Premier or the Minister of Finance to treat the conditions of employees fairly. That's really what's required in Ontario, to treat people fairly, and this bill does part of that but it doesn't complete the job.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Minister of Labour, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for Thornhill, the member for Nickel Belt, the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and the member for Durham for their comments. I'll just speak to how the member for Thornhill and the member for Durham from the Conservative Party here feel that there should be two classes of citizens in this province. Those who work through temporary help agencies—this is what they were saying here: They feel that they should not be treated fairly and they should not have dignity and respect within the workplace. We feel that that's not right, and we want to level the playing field for those workers working through temporary help agencies.

I'm speaking to the gallery that is here today, and I welcome you. Thank you very much.

I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for her comments, but she may not understand the legislation as well. The legislation has put in place the elimination of barriers to those workers; has taken away the elect-to-work that was before them also so they would not get holiday pay; has ensured that they can now move from temporary employment to permanent employment without barriers or restrictions; and has made sure that termination and severance pay are the same as for all other workers in Ontario. They will be treated exactly the same now as all workers in Ontario, and we feel that is fair and the right thing to do.

I want to thank the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for his hard work on committee, for understanding the issues very well and for understanding that we're working with both employers and employees to make it right for all workers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. I just remind honourable members to speak through the Chair, not directly to the gallery, especially today, as the galleries are likely to be full.

Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would seek unanimous consent to stand down our lead speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed? Do we have consent to stand down the PCs' lead speaker? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to stand and give some comments on this piece of legislation. It was interesting listening to the Minister of Labour speak to this bill and speak about the experiences that he had as a student working for a temp agency. There was a certain amount of—he wasn't treated very well in that experience, and I can well understand that. I would agree with the minister that temp agencies—in fact, every agency, every employer in Ontario—should live up to the Em-

ployment Standards Act in this province. Unfortunately, this bill that is being brought in isn't necessarily going to do that, first of all, and secondly, he's using a sledgehammer to kill a fly. The effect of this bill is going to be that it is going to drive employment out of this province at a time when we desperately need employment of all sorts.

We would love to have employment at the higher salaried levels, at the higher payment levels. There's an interesting statistic that I would hope isn't lost on the government. We were living in a different world then, but in 2007 there was a statistic that the average wage in Ontario was \$6,500 less than it was in the United States. How that \$6,500 related to the revenue stream that the government has was that if Ontario's average salary was \$6,500 more, the government would reap \$29 billion in tax revenue—\$29 billion more. So higher wages are a good thing; they're a good thing for government. Imagine what we could do with an additional \$29 billion that is there with very little effort and no expenses, other than the creation of higher-paying jobs. This bill is not going to accomplish that.

If you can imagine a company that imports products from the Far East: They come in and they need repackaging. They come in on a sporadic basis. If it's a clothing item, for instance, it might come in at this time of year. It might be, let's say, golf shirts. They come in and they need to be repackaged, put in different sizes. That's something that takes perhaps two or three weeks, to handle a number of containers. Temporary workers might be hired to do that kind of work.

If we put barriers in front of those people to hire those temporary workers, if we make those temporary workers more expensive to hire, it is easy for those companies to move their location, to move their place of operations to the port of arrival of that container. That container may arrive in Port Elizabeth, New Jersey; it may arrive in Halifax; it may arrive in St. John's; it may arrive in Vancouver; it may arrive in various places across this country. Once it's in a container, it can move to various places across this country. It's very easy for that to happen.

The distribution from those major cities where containers arrive to the rest of Canada can also be done very, very easily. The truck communications and the rail transportation that we have across this country are highly sophisticated and can handle a lot of those situations, so it's very easy for those companies to move. Capital has wings and it travels easily. It travels no more easily than in industries that hire at the lower end of the wage spectrum because in the lower end of the wage spectrum, there is a dearth of capital involved. The capital that is involved is tied up in the goods that are coming into the country. Those situations will be leaving Ontario under this bill.

Couple that with this government's action on the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board regulations that were brought in last year, where the cost to an independent builder or construction company is probably \$11,000 a year, minimum, and that's an additional cost to those

companies. That's something that is going to make their life more difficult to exist in Ontario in a very, very difficult economic time.

Add to that the continuing increase in minimum wage. Let me be clear. I would love everyone to make \$50 an hour. It's just not possible in a real world for those kinds of things to happen. You have to be competitive with other jurisdictions. I've prefaced my opening remarks to say what a great thing it would be for this province and for this country to have our average wage much higher than it is. But in order to do that we have to increase our productivity, we have to increase our competitiveness, and we have to maintain that competitiveness with other jurisdictions that right now, quite frankly, are eating our lunch because we are so uncompetitive in so many areas, which is why Ontario has the slowest rate of job growth or the highest rate of job losses in the country as we speak. That's a sad thing for Ontario, which has always led the way as far as job growth, economic investment and growth. It is a difficult thing when those situations face the once-great Ontario.

1010

Of course, Ontario also became a have-not province on the first of April. The federal government gave Ontario \$14 million in subsidies as a have-not province for the first time in Ontario's history. On April 1, they gave us \$14 million. It's the only time that the provincial government has ever received that kind of money, and this government didn't take advantage of it with a photo op. There was no photo op for the \$14 million that was handed over by Ottawa to Ontario on April 1. It's amazing that that photo op was missed by this government. Apparently they were hoping that no one would notice. But the \$14 million is the first time in Canada's history, in Ontario's history, that that kind of money has flowed from Ottawa to Ontario. That indeed is a very sad, sad thing for Ontario to be experiencing.

The industry is extremely concerned about the temp agencies. Yes, the minister had an experience with a temp agency that perhaps wasn't the best experience in the world. I wouldn't hesitate for a moment to recognize that there are some agencies out there that take advantage of the regulations and the rules, and they run as close up to the line as they possibly can. But the vast majority of temp agencies are good, solid companies which treat their employees fairly. After all, their future depends on people who come and supply their labour and services. They treat that raw resource, if you will, fairly and equitably in every way. That, of course, represents the vast majority of those agencies. I don't think anyone here would argue with the fact that there are companies on the other side of that equation as well.

However, they are concerned about the direction that this is going in, and one of the key issues is the timing of this legislation. We find ourselves in Ontario, and in fact in Canada and the world, in an economic slump, in a recession that is said to be the worst that we're going to experience in our lifetime. It's the worst recession that we've seen since the 1930s.

Earlier this week, the Bank of Canada announced that its overnight rate will be reduced to a quarter of 1%, a record low. It said it will maintain that record low interest rate until the middle of 2010. That is a year and a bit out; it's a year and a quarter away. We're going to be looking at that one quarter of 1% interest rate—I think that's probably the longest period of time that the Bank of Canada has guaranteed interest rates in Ontario's and Canada's history. It bespeaks the significance of the economic situation that we find ourselves in at this point in time—and this government is bringing in legislation to make it more difficult for people at the lower end of the economic scale to find work and to remain employed. So I have a great deal of difficulty with the timing of this particular legislation.

There are, I think, three major concerns that the employers and businesses have relating to this legislation. One is the continuance of employment while not working. This is a situation where a student is employed during the summer, finishes his employment and goes back to school but is deemed to continue to be employed, and there is some flow of money at some level to that employee even though he is no longer working. That's a cost to the companies which has never been part of the temporary workers' service, and that is of very real concern to their continued profitability.

The termination and severance situation is another one that gives them real pause. If you go back to the example of the breaking up of containers that I used earlier, and the distribution of golf shirts or any other widget that might come into this country, a worker who works there for two weeks in that distribution would be subject to termination and severance allowances. Even though he came to work knowing that it was a two-week job and the salary would be less than this, knowing everything about the situation that he faced, this bill would insist that he get more than he had agreed to. That is a real concern, because that would make that industry just that much less competitive. So, off those jobs go to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and perhaps some of them would even end up in British Columbia.

The third real concern that the businesses have in this area is the regulating of business terms and client fees within the service agreements. This is where the government is involving itself in the agreements that people have in a contract and does nothing but add to the costs. The government is adding 100 inspectors in this area. Again, I have no concern with the adding of 100 inspectors to ensure that people are treated fairly and—I think I'm being cut off. I have no problems with people being treated fairly. I do have a problem when that fairness adds to the cost of doing business in this province at a time when we should be encouraging employment, and encouraging employers, not discouraging them.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd like to ask all to join me in welcoming a good friend of mine whom I rode the buses with here to Queen's Park, a retired General Motors skilled trades worker, Mr. Roland Weigel.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want the chamber to welcome a few thousand-plus auto workers, auto worker retirees, their friends and families, other trade union supporters and people advocating for pension protection who are in the chamber and gathered on the front lawn of Queen's Park today.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am delighted today to introduce 46 people from the riding of Prince Edward-Hastings who have travelled—I think they started their journey at 6 o'clock this morning—to join us in the Legislative Assembly to see how our democratic system works.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: It's certainly my pleasure to welcome my daughter, Jasmine Mitchell, to the House today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to wear the green ribbons today in support of the Gift of Life campaign. The green ribbons will be provided to all the members. I believe we have unanimous consent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome Bob Cassidy, superintendent with the Waterloo District School Board, who is joining us here at Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Parliament of Australia, led by the Australian Senate president, Senator the Honourable John Hogg. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would like to introduce Mark Douglas with us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. One of the items of your budget bill that's causing concern, and rightly so, is the fact that you're providing yourself and your Minister of Finance unfettered access to the pension benefits guarantee fund, giving you the unilateral entitlement to top up the fund with taxpayer-funded grants that don't need to be repaid, the fact that you're changing it—I would suggest, under the shadow of darkness—from a loan to a grant for the purpose of apparently paying claims. In the same breath, you've stated emphatically that you have no intention of bailing out pensions with taxpayer money.

Premier, if that's the case, why are you ramming this budget bill through, giving yourself the entitlement to do just that? Why is it even in the budget in the first place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity; I had a chance to speak about this yesterday, and I'll speak to it again today.

There is a pension benefit guarantee fund in the province of Ontario. It was started in 1981. The upshot is that it's grossly underfunded at present and grossly inadequate when it comes to meeting pressing needs. There was some debate as to whether or not government had a responsibility to use taxpayer dollars to provide additional funds to this particular pension benefit guarantee fund. We believe that is not the case. What we're doing, through our budget, is making it clear that we don't have that responsibility, but we are reserving the right, that maybe at some point in time it may be—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Perhaps my friends opposite are all-seeing and all-knowing with respect to all future circumstances. I'm not.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: "We won't do it but we want to have the right to do it": That sounds like a true Liberal. The Progressive Conservative caucus stands with, I think, all Ontarians on being concerned with this Premier and, some would suggest, a bankrupt conscience, saying one thing and doing exactly the opposite, which he's suggesting is quite appropriate right now. That's the case with the McGuinty sales tax, where you're talking to your caucus, saying one thing, and your minister was in Ottawa signing a deal.

Yesterday you said you reserve the right to make a contribution to the pension benefits guarantee fund—you just said that again—if it serves the public interest. We think the public interest would best be served if you provided an open and transparent mechanism to know why you're doing that.

Premier, if you're telling us today that you're not saying one thing and doing another, will you amend your budget bill to include a transparent reporting mechanism to the Legislative Assembly before the Minister of Finance can grant one taxpayer—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That sounds sensible to me, and I'm not sure why we can't do that, and when the Minister of Finance gets back from his trip, I will take it up directly with him. I'm just not prepared to say here today that there is no circumstance of any kind at any time that might arise—whenever—where it would not serve the greater public interest for us to put money into the pension benefit guarantee fund. Perhaps my honourable colleague can say he knows that with absolute certainty, but I can't. What I have said is that, given the circumstances as I understand them today, our government is not prepared to do that. But there may arise a time in the future. I think my honourable colleague makes an

interesting and, I would also argue, sensible suggestion, and we will seriously consider that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: If it's a sensible suggestion, which we believe it is, why don't you make a commitment rather than suggesting you'll look at it? Given your sorry track record of saying one thing and doing exactly the opposite, I believe that Ontarians have a right to be suspicious. What are your real motives in shoving through this unilateral right for you to grant taxpayers' money to a fund that you said yesterday you won't top up? If you're not hiding any motives here, will you commit with an amendment to your budget bill that you'll give full disclosure to the Ontario Legislature and to the Ontario public before you grant a single dime to the fund? This is taxpayers' money, not yours. Will you make that commitment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm not sure I can add much to what I've already said. I think it is a sensible suggestion. We will seriously consider it. I'm leaning toward it myself, but again, this is the first time I've heard it. What I can say is that there is a broader pension concern here, and I would invite my colleague to give some thought to that as well as what we might do together—together with the federal government—when it comes to addressing the fact that there is a growing sense of income insecurity among all Ontario and Canadian retirees, not just those who have the benefit of pensions, either defined contribution or defined benefit pensions, but for the 65% or so of Ontarians and Canadians who don't have any pension. We need to figure out a better way to ensure that, as all of us get on in age, we're going to be able to enjoy a decent standard of living in retirement.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier: Not too many years ago the Premier said, and I'm quoting from Hansard: "Public hearings"; those two words go together nicely if you believe in true democracy." As you know, Premier, the Progressive Conservative caucus requested public hearings on your budget bill. We proposed public hearings—that's your definition of true democracy—in hard-hit communities like Goderich, Guelph, Peterborough and North Bay, communities that have lost thousands of jobs, and what was your answer, Premier? You slammed the door in our face and in the faces of all those hard-hit communities. You and your sheep-like backbenchers voted it down. Premier, do you know the meaning of the word "hypocrisy"?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw his last comment, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had an opportunity to have some extensive debate on our budget bill. We're looking forward to holding committee hearings as well. I'm not sure there was ever any more extensive consul-

tation conducted by any previous Minister of Finance at any time. Obviously, given the state of our economic challenges—this being the biggest economic crisis in some 80 years—it was very important that there be a thorough level of consultation, including inviting—for the first time ever, to my knowledge—direct contact with the leaders of the opposition parties in meetings with the Minister of Finance. We think it's very important for us to move forward as quickly as we can, allowing, of course, for these committee hearings to take place, and we look forward to engaging in that.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Many areas in this province are suffering under your watch. In Huron—Bruce, 500 jobs disappeared when Volvo closed; 200 jobs with CanGro closures; 170 jobs when Wescast Industries and Dunline Rubber closed; in Guelph and Wellington, W.C. Wood, 200 jobs lost; Better Beef, 360 jobs lost; Imperial Tobacco, 550; ABB Manufacturing, 280 jobs lost.

That's just the tip of the iceberg, Premier, with respect to job losses, yet the members representing those areas followed your orders, Mr. True Democracy, and voted against public hearings in their ridings.

Premier, perhaps the Speaker will allow this: What's your definition of true democracy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think one of the things that Ontarians want us to do is to bring what assistance and what solutions forward that we might in response to this economic challenge. That's what our budget represents. It's an effort to build both a more caring and a more competitive Ontario.

The business concerns that my colleague raises are real, and nobody can deny that. That's why we plan to reduce business taxes in the province of Ontario. That's why we intend to reduce taxes not only for our corporations, but for our small businesses as well. That's why we want to get on with our budget. That's why we want to move forthwith in an effort to bring that assistance. We want to continue to make massive investments in infrastructure as well, so that we can create those jobs on the ground right now, in keeping with the intent of our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier gives very limited acknowledgment of the dire straits facing many communities and Ontarians today. Many individuals, families, communities, are facing unprecedented challenges. These are Ontarians who deserve to be heard, but your backbenchers have made it clear that obeying you and turning their backs on their constituents is their priority. Even your acolytes in the editorial offices of the Toronto Star can't believe how far you've drifted from your lofty rhetoric of just a few years ago.

Premier, will you reconsider? Accept our proposal for extensive public hearings on your budget bill. Do the right thing.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: For months, my honourable colleague has accused us of failing to take action in the

face of a serious economic crisis. So we tabled a budget in this Legislative Assembly. It takes aggressive action in response to this economic crisis. It invests over \$32 billion in infrastructure. It proceeds in a sensible way to reduce business taxes. It proceeds in a sensible way to provide tax relief to our families, especially our lower-income families. We now decide that we want to get on with this and bring that relief to the people of Ontario, and he says, "Slow down. You're moving too quickly."

I know where Ontarians stand: They want us to get on with this. They're out there on the front lines. They're experiencing the full consequence of this recession. They've charged us with bringing relief to them and bringing forward some kind of a solution. Our budget represents that relief and that solution, so we're looking forward to moving forward with it.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. In the gallery today, there are dozens of auto workers and pensioners, and there are thousands more outside. I ask this question to the Premier on their behalf and on behalf of all Ontario workers: How is it possible for this government to say to these workers, who have paid into pension funds their entire working lives, that it refuses to take action to ensure that they are going to get every last pension penny owed to them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think one of the great Ontario and Canadian values that ought to inform this debate, of course, is fairness.

The first thing I'd like to draw to my honourable colleague's attention is the fact that, so far, Ontario taxpayers have come to the table with \$1.3 billion—that's just of late—in order to provide assistance to the auto sector working here in the province of Ontario. We think the single most important thing we can do to help those retirees in the auto sector is to put their companies on a sustainable footing to make sure that they can continue to carry on business. That's why we brought \$1.3 billion to the table. We've already put out \$750 million that has flowed to the Chrysler corporation, and we look forward to continuing to work both with Chrysler and GM.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier knows that people are working hard all of their lives, and at the very least they should be able to expect, when it comes time to end those working lives, that they are going to be able to count on the retirement income that they have put away themselves over decades of time in the workplace. So I'm going to ask the Premier one more time: How does this Premier have the nerve to say to these hard-working Ontarians that their provincial government refuses to do whatever needs to be done to guarantee that their pensions are there when they need them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my colleague again that I think \$1.3 billion is fairly significant, and I'm not sure that's the end of it; we'll have to wait

and see how things unfold. But I can say to my honourable colleague that while it might be argued—and, in fact, I think it legitimately can be argued—that what has happened to the workers is unfair, I think we need to find a way to be fair in terms of the solution that we bring forward. It's not just the CAW retirees that ought to concern all of us, but the fact that many pensioners, and the overwhelming majority of Ontarians who don't have the benefit of a pension, are staring into some considerable economic uncertainty in their later years. That's why I've asked Prime Minister Harper if he might not convene a national summit where we can come to grips with this together—all the provinces, all the territories, with our resources—to see what we might do to ensure that there's income security for our retirees.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government just tabled a budget bill that contains \$4 billion in tax breaks for corporations that need it the least. It's going to take another \$3 billion by adding 8% to things like home heating bills, gas for the car and even the morning coffee and doughnut, but there's no money in this Premier's budget to protect the pensions of the people in these galleries and millions of Ontarians like them. Whose side is this government on? Because it is certainly isn't on the side of hard-working women and men across the province.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There are, I guess, a few solutions that might be considered, and I just think we should be fair in terms of considering the consequences of the solution put forward yesterday by my honourable colleague. She says that we should create a CPP equivalent here in the province of Ontario. Were we to do that, it would require that we take 5% off every paycheque and business—that every paycheque for every employed person would be reduced by 5%, and businesses would have to pay another 5% on top of that. If you're self-employed, the NDP want to take another 10% off your paycheque. So that's one solution.

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, she should understand the consequences of whatever she proposes. If we're talking about creating a CPP equivalent in the province of Ontario, sometimes it's important to think before you speak. It requires an additional 5% cost to employees and an additional 5% cost to employers. Those are the consequences of what she is proposing.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: This is a sorry and shameful spectacle that we're seeing from this Premier this morning. There is a fund whose sole purpose is the guaranteeing of Ontario's pensions. For five years now, New Democrats told this Premier that the fund is full of holes, that its funding is inadequate. We told him clearly that if bad times hit, the whole thing was going to come tumbling down like a house of cards. Why didn't he listen then and why isn't he listening now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: When it comes to the auto sector in particular—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think one of the things of which we can be proud in Ontario is that we are the only subnational government anywhere in the world which is stepping up and taking some responsibility and making some considerable effort for our auto sector. There is considerable support for the auto sector being offered in Japan, in Germany, in many parts of Europe, in the Scandinavian countries, of course in US and in some parts of South America. But there's only one subnational jurisdiction in the world which is also saying, "We want to be there and we want to do our part," and that's us. As I say, we've made a commitment of \$1.3 billion. We've disbursed \$750 million already. I think that is considerable.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is acting like he hasn't been in government for the past five years—and he has. He's had all that time to fix this problem. He knows that the monthly guarantee of \$1,000 is wholly inadequate and should be raised to \$2,500. He knows that the formula for financing the fund is totally broken. He should have fixed it when we had good economic times. How can he possibly stand here in this House and continue to claim otherwise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure if during the previous five years there was ever a single reference by any member by the NDP to the pension benefit guarantee fund and now it's become a very important issue.

I want to remind my honourable colleague that we are anticipating that the economy in Ontario will contract by—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Bob Rae, that SOB.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw. I sob for Bob Rae.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We are warned by the official opposition that we ought not to put a single penny more into the pension benefit guarantee fund. We hear from the NDP that we should throw caution to the wind and throw as much as it takes into the pension benefit guarantee fund. On this side of the House we have a responsibility to be balanced and to try to be fair. I think the single most important thing that we can do for those CAW workers is to put those companies on a sound financial footing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What we are talking about here is the retirement income of hundreds of thousands of retirees in this province, and it is owed to those workers—to Ontario workers, some of whom have given their lifetimes to their employer. This government's response? Shut down the debate on its flawed budget bill—a budget bill that contains harmful changes to the very fund that's supposed to be guaranteeing those pensions for those

workers. With so many workers and pensioners worried about their economic security, how can this Premier continue to defend his government's approach?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague is mistaken in terms of the response that we're putting forward. Our response is to do everything we can to keep these companies alive. Every time we have worked with the auto sector in the past, made shared investments in the past, the NDP voted against that kind of support and those kinds of partnerships. I have yet to hear them say that they are in favour of the \$1.3 billion that we are tendering, that we are putting forward, to support the auto sector in the province of Ontario.

If you were to ask the retirees, they would agree that the single most important thing we can do to provide them with the security, the confidence and the reassurance that they're looking for is to put those companies on a sound financial footing. That remains our single most important objective, and we will not stop until we succeed.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. You've heard of Joe the plumber? I want to introduce you to Mark the painter. Mark, stand up. Mark Douglas lives with his family in Georgetown. He owns his own business, goes to work every day, pays his taxes and hopes for a better future for his family, his community and his province. Last year, the Minister of Finance wrote to Mr. Douglas promising him that Ontario "would not agree to harmonizing the GST if that would increase the tax burden on Ontario taxpayers, particularly with respect to basic essentials such as home heating."

Premier, why did you force your Minister of Finance to break his promise to Mr. Douglas and the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Let me say at the outset that I'm happy to work with the member with respect to the gentleman who is in the gallery and—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

We welcome all of our guests to the Legislature to observe the proceedings, but we just ask that you not participate in the proceedings as well.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: It is remarkable that we have a situation here where, in fact, everybody from Conservative Finance Minister Jim Flaherty on the one hand to the vast majority of jurisdictions on the other hand support this particular tax approach. Why? Because we are an export-oriented jurisdiction and, as an export-oriented jurisdiction, particularly with respect to Quebec, we don't want companies having to pay twice. This will make our province even more competitive. It will strengthen our

economy. It will allow for more growth. I say to the member it is absolutely, without question—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Renfrew will withdraw his comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The only thing that this tax will do with regard to economic development is destroy economic development in the province of Ontario. I'd like page Cameron to deliver this letter over to the Premier so he can see it for himself.

I'm privileged to represent Mr. Douglas and the rest of my constituents in this Legislature. Premier, you should listen to Mr. Douglas, if you won't listen to your own backbenchers. He says your new 13% tax is yet another broken promise. He says it will ruin businesses like his; it will dramatically increase the price of fuel; it will drive legitimate businesses into the underground economy.

Again, Premier, why are you ignoring legitimate concerns like these? Why did your government break a written promise to Mr. Douglas?

Hon. Michael Bryant: What has happened to the Conservative Party of Ontario? The Conservative Party used to care about the economy. The Conservative Party used to support the kind of tax changes that would grow business. This is the Conservative Party that up until the tabling of the budget supported harmonization of taxes. This is the party that used to support tax cuts. Now we have a situation where the government of Ontario brings in tax changes called for by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, by everybody, from Roger Martin of the Martin prosperity institute to every leading economist in Ontario, yet this party is against those tax cuts.

We're in favour of growing the economy. We will do so with these tax changes. I honestly don't understand what has happened to the Ontario Conservative Party.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Not only is the existing pension system in crisis, but there is also the ongoing crisis of those who don't have any coverage at all. On the Liberals' watch, those with any sort of workplace pension have declined to less than 35%. An increasing percentage of those with pension coverage don't have defined pension plans anymore.

What does this government intend to do about the 65% of Ontarians who have no pension plan whatsoever and face a retirement without dignity and security?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague makes a good point, but I would ask him to grab some time with his leader. We need to reconcile their competing demands. The fact is, they're not easy to reconcile, but I will also say there is some legitimacy to both those concerns. We do have a concern about the CAW retirees, for example, and we do have some concerns about all

those retirees who don't benefit from any kind of pension.

I think we've always proven, as Ontarians and as Canadians, that we are at our best when we approach these massive challenges together. This doesn't just affect retirees in Ontario, it affects retirees right across the country, and that's why I'm asking Prime Minister Harper to convene a national summit where we can come together and begin to come to grips with this challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: What I take from that answer is that the government has absolutely no idea how to expand coverage in this province. New Democrats believe that every worker in this province should be covered by a workplace pension plan. New Democrats believe that after a lifetime of hard work, the least we owe Ontario workers is a retirement with dignity and security. New Democrats believe that there are very concrete things that can be done to expand coverage and that the 65% of Ontarians who have no coverage, can't afford to wait any longer.

How can it be that after more than five years in office, this government has no plan to make sure that the 65% of Ontarians who have no pension plan can retire with dignity and security?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my colleague offers no suggestions with respect to where the money would come from to help folks who find themselves in difficult times in their retirement. I want to remind my honourable colleague that the economy, we project, will shrink by two and a half per cent this year. I'll remind him that we're running some considerable deficits, that we're investing thirty-two and a half billion dollars into infrastructure, and that we've found a way to increase funding levels for education, for health care, for post-secondary education and for things like the Ontario child benefit and affordable housing. I would ask him, where would he find the funds necessary to invest in making our retirees more secure at this point in time? I think it's a big challenge; I think we need to come together nationally to solve it.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Two shootings in the span of the last 48 hours have deeply affected the community of York South-Weston. The first incident on Tuesday evening has claimed the life of a 19-year-old man, and from media reports I understand that the victim was shot several times in the back. Yesterday evening, another young man was shot several times in the head and in the leg near a bus shelter, and he is fighting for his life.

Minister, my riding has had a very high incidence of violent crimes in the past year. Gun crime on our streets affects not just those who are involved, but also people who are just going about their everyday life. The com-

munity has been working very hard to find solutions. What measures is our government taking to tackle these appalling acts—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank Mrs. Albanese, the member for York South–Weston, for the question and for being such a very, very strong advocate for safety in her community. I would also like to offer our collective condolences to the victims and to the entire community of York South–Weston.

Our government is committed to keeping communities safe, which is why we've made substantial investments into specially targeted initiatives. Our unprecedented \$74-million guns and gangs program includes the Toronto anti-violence intervention strategy. That's known as TAVIS, and TAVIS incorporates officers from the Toronto Police Services drug squad, guns and gangs task force and intelligence services, who work directly with communities so that a multi-pronged approach to tackling violent crime can be developed. Our government has also added—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I thank the minister for the answer, but I'm still deeply concerned about the residents of York South–Weston. My question is again directed to the Minister of Community Safety.

Statistics indicate that my riding is one of the most affected by crime and violence. As you can imagine, I too often hear serious concerns about safety, security and violence in my community. I know that my constituents welcome the new 250 police officers in the city of Toronto. I'm also very glad to have learned from the Toronto Police Services that officers from the TAVIS community response unit will be assigned to our neighbourhood during the summer. While I'm happy about the work that is being done in my riding, I am still deeply concerned about the rate of violent crime in York South–Weston.

Can the Minister please tell this House what further action my community can expect to ensure their safety and their security?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I appreciate the member's concern for her community and I would like to assure her that our government remains committed to doing all we can to keep Ontarians safe. We will continue to develop strategies with our policing partners and other ministries to provide a multifaceted approach to tackling violence in our communities.

Ontarians concerned with gun violence expect their political leaders at all levels of government to proceed in a manner reflective of their concerns. Again, we call on the federal government for a handgun ban, for the continuation of the long gun registry, and we support the Canadian Police Association in their call for the federal government to live up to their commitment made in 2006 for an additional 2,500 new police officers on the streets of Canada. In the end, it's all about safety of Ontarians, and the McGuinty government is willing to work with everyone to ensure we achieve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday, Dr. Robert McMurtry, a former dean of medicine at the University of Western Ontario, appeared before the standing committee on Bill 150. He asked that the province conduct a formal study into the health effects of wind turbines, since he has done a survey of people living near these turbines and found that the majority suffered from headaches, sleep disturbances and depression.

I ask you, Minister: Will you urge your Premier to do this in-depth analysis of the potential health risks of wind turbines?

Hon. David Caplan: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I have had the chance to meet with Dr. McMurtry, and the Premier has spoken with him as well. We know him to be an esteemed medical practitioner, one who has been extraordinarily dedicated to the health of people in the province of Ontario. That's why we think it's really very important as we move forward that the Ministry of the Environment, which will have responsibility for establishing things like minimum setbacks, has the advantage of all necessary health information on that basis. Accordingly, we think that there is merit in making sure that we continue to arm ourselves with the best possible information to make those decisions. We will be working closely with the Ministry of the Environment to establish that in a fashion which offers strong protections both for the natural environment and certainly human health.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's regrettable that this government is not prepared to respond to the concerns of individuals like Dr. McMurtry. Certainly we read in the paper today and we hear on CBC that people share his concerns about the health effects of wind turbines. In fact, Minister of Health, your parliamentary assistant acknowledged on April 15 in London, in response to a very tearful presentation from the Ripley Group, that she was, "Sorry that the wind farm ... caused these health issues and caused grief for your families." Members of this group spoke of experiencing symptoms such as itching sore eyes, heart pounding, high blood pressure and irritability.

Minister, will you conduct a formal study into the health effects of wind turbines, as requested by Dr. McMurtry?

Hon. George Smitherman: We do want to thank all the members of the Legislature and especially the many people of the province of Ontario who came to offer views with respect to the implementation of renewable energy. We do think that there's a lot of merit in the various positions that were brought forward, and we do agree most certainly that it's our obligation to make sure that, as we move forward with more renewable energy in the

province of Ontario, we do so in a fashion which is complementary to health concerns—keeping in mind that, unlike that party, we're committed to eliminating coal, which is a very, very substantial health concern for people, causing at least 2,800 premature deaths in the province of Ontario. We've noted the reversal of policy on the part of that party in the debate so far.

But yes, we most certainly do think that it's important to inform ourselves with studies related to health matters. We think that Ontario is a big enough place that it's possible to both move forward with more renewable energy and certainly do so in a fashion which is consistent with protecting human health.

PENSION PLANS RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. M. le premier ministre sait que la garantie mensuelle de 1 000 \$ est complètement insuffisante et devrait être augmentée à 2 500 \$. J'aimerais lui lire ce qu'on a dans le Hansard.

A quote from Hansard from October 13, 2004, Ms. Andrea Horwath: "I call on the government today to act by immediately increasing the monthly amount guaranteed by the pension benefit guarantee fund from \$1,000 to \$2,500." I could quote again from May 15, 2005, and many more times.

Mais ce que je voudrais savoir—le premier ministre agit comme si ce n'est pas lui qui était le chef du gouvernement pendant les cinq dernières années, les années de prospérité. Il sait que la formule de financement du fonds est inadéquate. Ma question est la suivante : est-ce que le premier ministre va augmenter la garantie mensuelle à 2 500 \$?

1110

L'hon. Dalton McGuinty: Je vous remercie, mon amie, pour cette question. J'apprécie beaucoup l'opportunité de parler en français ici à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. En premier, je dirais d'une manière très directe que non, nous ne sommes pas prêts à investir l'argent qui serait nécessaire, qui serait un montant d'argent très considérable.

What I'm saying is, the NDP are asking that we increase the maximum benefit payable out of the pension benefits guarantee fund from \$1,000 to \$2,500 per month. We don't have the money to do that. That's the honest answer, with respect to that. I think that we can find a way collectively, as 32 million Canadians, in the face of this great challenge that is going to force some considerable difficulties on retirees right across the country. But we don't have the resources at this point in time to take this pension benefits guarantee fund and change it so that the maximum benefit goes from \$1,000 to \$2,500—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'apprécie un peu la réponse directe du premier ministre, qui n'est pas prêt—

M. Rosario Marchese: Pas beaucoup.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mais pas beaucoup, non. Les travailleurs du nord de l'Ontario sont inquiets face à leurs pensions, surtout ceux de l'industrie forestière, quand on voit plusieurs organismes qui font faillite. Puis, on voit également la décision du gouvernement d'arrêter les débats sur le budget qui, selon nous, a des défaillances, surtout parce qu'il contient des changements plutôt douteux face aux pensions.

Donc, ma question est : quelles sont les actions du premier ministre pour adresser les craintes des travailleurs—des travailleurs à la pension, des travailleurs à la retraite—dans le nord de l'Ontario ?

L'hon. Dalton McGuinty: Les inquiétudes qu'ont les travailleurs qui se trouvent dans le nord de l'Ontario sont presque les mêmes que celles de tous les travailleurs, regardless of where they happen to find themselves in the province of Ontario. I've had the opportunity just recently to visit northern Ontario once again. I visited a sawmill in Chapleau that is 51% owned by the First Nations community. We are pleased and proud to partner with them to strengthen that particular industry.

We've made investments in the forestry sector in general. We put a plan in place to provide about \$1 billion in supports to the forestry sector. We'll continue to look for ways to support workers in northern Ontario.

When it comes to retirees in the north, they face the same kinds of challenges as retirees in the south, who face the same kinds of challenges as retirees right across this country. I think a national challenge demands—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. My constituents are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits that they derive from buying Ontario food products. It's well known that food produced by Ontario's farmers is among the freshest, safest and best-quality in the world.

Our government took a major leap forward in supporting this movement when it launched the multi-year Pick Ontario Freshness strategy in 2008. Buying Ontario meat, eggs and dairy products supports local economies in rural Ontario and helps farmers get a fair price for their hard work. Buying Ontario food also helps to protect the environment, as the food has to travel fewer kilometres, therefore reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Could the minister please share with this House what our government is doing this year to promote local foods and how our government is leading by example?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I appreciate the question from the honourable member, who does a great job promoting Ontario foods. Her family is responsible for producing some of it.

Our government has worked very hard with our industry partners, and they've told us that when we promote their products, that's good for their business. That is

why our government has invested \$8 million in our Pick Ontario Freshness branding and marketing campaign.

We have also invested \$3 million in the Ontario market investment fund. This is a program that helps our agri-food industry groups and local food networks to develop ways that they can even better promote food from their region. We have also invested \$1 million in our farmers' market strategy. And just this year, we have committed \$8 million annually in new funding so that we can promote the purchase of quality Ontario foods by our public sector institutions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know that the minister continues to work hard at fostering and cultivating partnerships in the agri-food sector. These partnerships between local producers, processors and grocers along the food chain are crucial to ensuring that Ontario's increasing demand for Ontario food products is met.

The Premier recently hosted our government's fifth Premier's Summit on Agrifood. This annual summit is an excellent opportunity for industry partners to network with one another and to generate new and exciting business opportunities. Farmers I've spoken with in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex appreciate the direction that our government is taking in partnering and working closely with them to meet the challenges that face their sector, while at the same time helping to advance new economic opportunities for farmers through our Buy Local strategy.

Could the minister please provide this House with more information about the strategy and the results that we've been seeing across the province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think a very important piece of this is, yes, we have made and will continue to make significant investments in promoting Ontario food products. What I'm also very happy to announce today in the House or to relay to members of the public is that it is having an impact. We know that 96% of Ontarians recognize that Foodland Ontario is local, and that is up from 94% last year; 87% of principal grocery shoppers express a propensity to purchase Ontario foods; and 69% are aware of the broader range of Ontario food products beyond just fruit and vegetables and that it now includes dairy products, meats, deli and bakery, and that's an increase of 40%.

What's really significant as well is the Savour Ontario program, which is designed to promote Ontario foods in eating establishments in the province. The number of establishments has increased from 40 to 100. That's a 150% increase—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

NURSES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm going to try the Minister of Health one more time. Ontario's registered nurses are gathering this week at their AGM, and in their press

release they reiterate that you must live up to your commitment to fund 3,000 nurses immediately this year.

Minister, there is a nursing shortage. Will you listen to the RNAO, alleviate the strain being placed on nurses in their workplace as they attempt to provide the care patients need, and will you commit to fund what they're asking for—the 3,000 desperately needed nurses—immediately?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to reiterate the commitment that this Premier, this finance minister, this health minister and this government have made to our nurses. We have hired 10,000 to date. We are committed to hiring an additional 9,000 nurses. It will, regrettably, take us longer than we had originally anticipated.

But I want to speak very directly to the member's point because she regrettably omits a very important fact. If you were to go to Workopolis and look at nursing positions in the province of Ontario, currently, in April 2009, you would find 500 positions that are being sought for nurses to go to work in hospitals, in long-term care and in community care across the province of Ontario. I refuse to accept any lecture from this member, who was a part of a party that cut nurses, that compared them to hula-hoop workers—6,000 positions lost. Our record—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This minister needs to stop playing politics. Personally, I am reading from the RNAO press release. It is you they are asking to live up to your commitment to fund the 3,000 nurses immediately. That's their press release; it's not mine. I would say to you, Minister, that we're also seeing layoffs of nurses in the province of Ontario. I ask you again: Will you listen to RNAO? They're going to ask you tomorrow when you and the Premier appear. It's their number one priority. Will you immediately live up to your promise to fund the urgently needed 3,000 more nurses?

Hon. David Caplan: I think it was very clear that the member had written her supplementary without, of course, listening to the answer, and I understand that the member is embarrassed by her sorry record when it comes to supporting the nurses of the province of Ontario. I accept no lectures from this member. I have been very upfront with our nursing partners that we are supporting them in a way they have not seen under a Conservative or New Democratic Party government. Ontario nurses know that we have put more resources behind them. They know that we have hired 10,000 nurses to date and we do have a plan to hire an additional 9,000 nurses.

Our budget very much spoke to the fact that in the face of the greatest global economic challenge in any of our lifetimes, we are continuing to support health care to the tune of a 4.7% increase this year over next. That includes hiring additional nurses, hiring nurses in hospitals, in long-term care and in the community.

I reiterate to the member: Please go to Workopolis. You will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. According to the National Council of Welfare, a whopping 38% of elderly single women live in poverty in Ontario. This number means that more than a third of these women are struggling to put food on their tables and pay their bills in what should really have been their golden years. It is no surprise that elderly women have higher poverty rates. They also have much lower rates of pension support.

Does the Premier agree that elderly women should not have to live a life of poverty and that they deserve the dignity of a pension after a lifetime of work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for his question. This government is very determined to fight poverty, and we have shown it in the six years that we have been in power, especially with the poverty reduction strategy.

We exclude no one. Older women are also included in the fight against poverty, and we are determined that we are going to help them. For those who need assistance, Ontario Works or ODSP is also available to them.

Every case is being looked at, and if they qualify; according to their criteria they will receive support from this government. We exclude no one in our fight against poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Perhaps the minister didn't understand the question. This question is about them being in poverty because they don't have access to a pension, so I'll ask it a little bit differently.

The fact of the matter is that women are over-represented in part-time employment, service and retail sectors. Even if they work their whole lives, that's where they work. Women represent two thirds of minimum wage earners and earn 29% less than men. The majority of women workers do not have access to a pension even after a lifetime of work.

My question is a tough one. It's not about welfare rates; it's about pensions. Will this government commit today to ensuring adequate pension coverage for all of Ontario's seniors, both women and men, so that they no longer have to live a life of poverty?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, it's a very good question. As a woman, I'm very concerned about the financial security of women. I know that when I visit seniors' homes, there are a lot of women who live on their old age pension and often live in poverty.

Your question goes above what this government can do. We need to look at pensions on the national scene, and that's what the Premier has suggested today. We should call a summit on pensions to ensure that people who are paying into pensions can receive them and those who are not can have security in their old age.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Source protection committees have been actively working across the province on plans to protect the sources of their drinking water. There are two committees active in my area: Saugeen, Grey-Sauble and Northern Bruce Peninsula, and Ausable, Bayfield and Maitland Valley.

Huron-Bruce is an agricultural region. Both of these committees have a strong and committed agricultural membership. Farmers are very good stewards of our environment, but they are concerned about how they will be affected by the Clean Water Act.

Minister, from the work done across the province so far, can you tell me how source protection will affect our farmers?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member knows, there are 19 committees working on these source protection plans for about 40 different source protection areas in the province. Most of these committees are finding, after they've been studying this for the last couple of years, that there are very few threats, in actual fact, even within the 100-metre zone around municipal wells across Ontario.

The policies that these source water protection committees are planning will be locally developed and will address significant drinking water threats. It's a science-based framework; it will concentrate their effort on high-risk activities. It's all about reducing risks to our ground-water and surface water. These committees are doing great work, and we want them to continue with the work so that they can plan for the areas around these municipal water wells.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Minister. I know that farmers will be pleased and reassured to hear that the work done so far indicates that the requirements resulting from source water protection planning will be reasonable and that the potential requirements would be based around what are already best practices. I know we all recognize the fact that manure and fuels that are improperly managed can be a threat to our water, and I am confident that the committees can find existing activities that are acceptable best practices and allow them to continue.

Minister, I know that we are only part of the way through the science-based assessments of threats to water quality and quantity. By 2012, committees will have completed source protection plans that must include policies and actions that need to be put in place to manage. As we move towards the full implementation of source water protection, what can farmers do to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member knows, we've made funding available for the landowners to take such risk reduction actions in advance of the final source plans that are currently being done. As a matter of fact, \$28

million was made available over a four-year period of time. This money has been made available since 2007, particularly for landowners who may eventually be impacted by the source water protection plans.

If a farm, for example, is located near a municipal drinking water well or a surface water intake, that farmer is eligible now for funding available through the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to better protect the drinking water source. The ministry has funded about 400 of these local projects so far, and the program is being delivered by most of Ontario's conservation authorities.

As we're completing our consultations across the province, we are aiming to update this program so that we can make the funding available, particularly in those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you've been promising a new transportation funding formula for schools since 2003, yet you have delivered nothing while lurching from crisis to crisis. Under your watch, the needs of rural schools continue to be ignored. Our school transportation reality is something you just don't acknowledge.

Minister, how are you able to come up with millions of dollars for Toronto swimming pools but when it comes to getting our children in Renfrew county to and from school safely, you tell our boards to cut costs? Toronto gets pools while Renfrew county gets empty promises and ultimatums. Why?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I choose never to lurch.

We have an absolutely concrete plan. We've been putting more money into transportation since we came into office. In fact, this year alone we've increased transportation funding by almost \$183 million; that's a 29% increase since we came into office.

What we have been doing across the province is working with boards and asking them to work together so that we've got kids on buses in a rational way, on routes that make sense to all of the community. We've got boards working in consortia. And in fact we're introducing a fuel escalator/de-escalator into the budget this year, which is something that bus operators and boards have been asking for so that they can have some predictability on what their fuel costs are going to be.

So, quite to the contrary of what the member opposite is saying, we've been working very closely with the boards and with the transportation industry to bring some rationality to school bus transportation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, Renfrew county pioneered the transportation consortia. They need no lessons from you.

You are mandating school boards in Renfrew county to cut transportation costs or face penalties. They are faced with making changes that could see some children

waiting for the bus out on a dark rural road well before 7 in the morning. Some working parents, who have children who will be picked up at different times on two different routes, could be faced with making the choice between leaving young children home alone or leaving their jobs.

Minister, it's time for you to show some respect for families who live in rural Ontario. Will you get your priorities straight and stop putting Toronto pools ahead of rural schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I met this week with the Ontario School Bus Association. We have a very strong working relationship. We are asking boards to work together, there is absolutely no doubt about that, and that makes perfect sense for everyone across the province—not just rural kids, but kids in northern communities and kids in urban communities. What we've said to boards is that they look at the efficiency reviews and look at the work that has been done, and all we're asking in this budget is that they move to those levels of efficiency. That means that the boards do need to work together and they need to come up with routing plans that make sense across a jurisdiction, because the fact is that buses going down a road can take kids that go to Catholic schools; they can take kids that go to public schools; they can take kids that go to French schools. We've been working with the boards, and we'll continue to work with those consortia. Those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. I've asked the government repeatedly to bring Bill 6, which ensures that all laid-off workers get every cent of their severance, vacation and back pay they earned, onto the committee agenda for public consultation. The responses that I get have nothing to do with Bill 6, with wage security, with pensions or with my question. Auto workers I visited at Aradco in Windsor had to weld themselves shut inside the plant to get the company's and the government's attention.

I'll try again. I'll speak slowly for them. When will this Premier actually respond to my question and bring Bill 6 onto the committee agenda for public consultation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member must be aware that he would be burdening this province with what he is proposing with billions of dollars in extra taxes for our employers. That is not the right thing to do when we're trying to create jobs. What we have asked for is, with the bankruptcy and insolvency—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The answer to the member is to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. It is under federal jurisdiction. We agree that the employees should be moved to super-creditor status. That is something that

would go a long way to helping employees across this province.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to congratulate the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for convincing the Conservatives to allow him back into the caucus—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That's not a point of order.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm introducing—Speaker, they're not actually here yet; they're tied up with security, but I will get it on the record here: Mr. Brian Rutherford, Lynn McCullough, Jan O'Neil, Joe O'Neil and John Vanderhorst—just a few of the many who are here today to express displeasure with the government on the pension issue.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure today to rise to say that recently the Premier of Ontario has been giving Ontario citizens mixed signals on the future of Ontario. Today, there are many hundreds, if not thousands, of demonstrators on the front lawn here representing union employees and other citizens of the province. They are very angry and upset at the uncertainty surrounding some of the important decisions in Ontario.

We all know that our economy is in rough shape. There are over 300,000 families with no paycheques. We also know that in Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty just cut, ended and closed debate on the budget, with the remaining question of why. What is he hiding? We know that the budget has the slick plan to introduce the new Dalton tax of 13%. Why? And why at this time, given the economy and the jobless state?

I also raise the question about the pensioners. You, Premier, should have intervened five or six years ago, to be sure. Employers should be required to pay up. Why did you continue to ignore expert advice and not deal with the issue? You had the opportunity to require this to be addressed.

Who's in charge over there? What's the plan? Are you just going to let people sit in their own stew?

MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE HOSPITAL FUNDRAISER

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I recently attended the Pakistan National Day gala in my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham.

The purpose of this event, which consisted of a wonderful evening of dinner and entertainment, was to raise public awareness and funds for the Markham Stouffville Hospital expansion. The Herculean efforts of the Pakistan National Day gala celebration committee raised the extraordinary sum of \$500,000 for the hospital. This was the organizing committee's seventh fundraising dinner for the Markham Stouffville Hospital, and, as always, it attracted a wide range of business, professional and community leaders.

Markham Stouffville Hospital was built to provide care to a community of 110,000 people in 1989 and currently serves a population of 300,000. It has long had a profound impact on my community and urgently needs to expand. Over the years, it has received funding from a number of sources, including individuals, community organizations, businesses and, of course, the government of Ontario. The decision of the organizers of the Pakistan National Day gala to assist the Markham Stouffville Hospital reflects the sense of community felt by our Canadian-Pakistani neighbours.

I commend the tremendous humanitarian efforts of the Pakistan National Day gala celebration committee and its chair, Mr. Khalid Usman, a former Markham councillor, who demonstrated the importance of building bridges within our community.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to take a look at what Mr. McGuinty has been saying in the past about democracy and how he seems to say one thing and do something totally different, as we saw this week when he rammed through the budget bill without giving the public in the province of Ontario the opportunity for public hearings and input.

It was quite different back in 1997, on March 4, when he proclaimed: "Democracy imposes responsibility on those who govern. Democracy gives the people a voice, but it also compels those who govern to listen to that voice. Democracy isn't just something that takes place once every four years. Democracy is what is supposed to happen in a free society each and every day."

It's regrettable that Mr. McGuinty did not heed his own words this week as he instead decided to time-allocate the budget bill and not allow for the public to speak. He didn't take the opportunity, as he thought in 1997 should happen, to listen to the voices of those people.

He also said: "Public hearings"; those two words go together nicely if you believe in true democracy." He said this on December 6, 1999. How different, his words from his actions.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: At the Protect Our Pensions rally today on the front lawn, I was standing with my brothers and sisters in the labour movement, who are deeply concerned about the state of their pensions. I now stand

in this Legislature to make sure that the calls for pension protection from workers all across Ontario are heard.

Those at the rally today worked hard all their adult lives, believing that when they retired, they would have a pension to live on. They are forced to live in uncertainty now. Pensions have been underfunded, and this government has done nothing to protect these workers.

Workers have had to rally many times to have their voices heard. It's time for the government to listen to their needs.

I spent Monday and Tuesday in Windsor at CAW rallies, and again today on the front lawn, raising the important issue of pension protection for thousands of Ontarians.

Bill 17, which I brought to the House earlier in this year, would raise the pension benefits guarantee fund to \$2,700, which will solve many of these workers' problems. I hope that it will not suffer the same fate as Bill 6.

Ontarians have earned and deserve their pensions, and they are waiting to hear how you will protect them. They are listening. What do you have to say to them?

PEEL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Last month, the William Osler Health Centre announced the selection of Zeidler Partnership Architects as the firm that will lead the team of professionals charged with the responsibility of redesigning and developing the Peel Memorial Hospital site. The formation of the project team is a major step forward, setting the stage for the preliminary decommissioning work to commence at the site this spring.

Zeidler is an international architectural firm headquartered in Toronto, with other offices in Canada, the US, Europe and Asia. Zeidler is known internationally and nationally for developing healing spaces that inspire a sense of community as well as create an environment of wellness.

A redeveloped Peel Memorial Hospital will play an important role in Osler's family of hospitals by providing Brampton, Etobicoke and surrounding communities with urgent care, ambulatory care, outpatient surgical procedures and specialty services. The focus of the new site will be on primary care as well as chronic disease prevention and management.

The redevelopment of Peel Memorial Hospital site is a priority for my community. This announcement will bring health care service providers and partners together to consider how best to deliver a new campus of health services that will serve the growing needs of Brampton.

I look forward to working with the project team to create a leading-edge facility in the downtown core which will meet the future health care needs of residents in Peel.

BEYOND THE BLUE BOX

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yesterday, I attended an event in Cobourg, in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West,

to celebrate Earth Day at Beyond the Blue Box. This retail business is a not-for-profit that began in 1992. Their vision was to provide work, social and training opportunities for developmentally challenged individuals while promoting reduction, reuse and recycling of waste. Sales have grown from \$2,000 in 1992 to over \$324,000 last year. These revenues support people with intellectual disabilities.

Beyond the Blue Box employs eight full-time staff along with 15 developmentally challenged individuals. Working closely with West Northumberland Community Living, they have helped more than 45 people participate in the work environment.

1310

Yesterday, we celebrated an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$125,000 to expand their facility to open Beyond the Blue Box Boutique. This funding was used to convert and restore an historic building into an accessible retail sales area to provide an affordable retail outlet for reusable items. The boutique will be used for the sale of books, designer clothing and antiques, all of which have been donated and diverted from landfills. Earth Day was the perfect opportunity to announce that last year alone, they diverted 1.5 million pounds of reusable items from our landfills. That's equivalent to the waste of 6,000 households.

I'd like to congratulate all the people who helped this facility become a success.

ORDRE DE LA PLÉIADE

M. Phil McNeely: Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour reconnaître les six récipiendaires de l'Ordre de la Pléiade qui ont reçu hier leur médaille des mains du lieutenant-gouverneur de l'Ontario, l'honorable David C. Onley. Il s'agit de M^{me} Lillian Anne Gagné, de Penetanguishene; M^{me} Tonia Mori, de Toronto; M. Paul-André Gauthier, de Sudbury; M. André Marcil, de Kapuskasing; M. Gilles G. Patry, d'Ottawa; et M. Jacques Janson, d'Ottawa.

L'Ordre de la Pléiade est l'ordre de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, destiné à reconnaître les mérites éminents des personnalités qui se sont distinguées en servant les idéaux de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, l'APF. Créée à Luxembourg en 1967, cette assemblée regroupe des parlementaires de 77 parlements ou organisations interparlementaires répartis sur les cinq continents. L'APF est reconnue comme l'assemblée consultative de la francophonie par le sommet des chefs d'État et de gouvernements des pays ayant le français en partage. C'est dire le mérite de nos six récipiendaires.

Je tiens donc à les féliciter et à souligner combien leur leadership et leurs réalisations pour la francophonie sont appréciés par cette chambre et par la province.

TORONTO WEST COURTHOUSE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: The old site of the Westwood Theatre near Six Points has a long history in my

community. Today, this valuable land sits close to both Kipling subway and Kipling GO station but has been underutilized for years. That is why I am so pleased that a new Toronto West courthouse is set to be built on this site.

My community understands the important role that redevelopment plays for businesses and families. This project will serve to revitalize an area of my riding that is in need of investment. This 7.7-hectare site is just blocks from one of Etobicoke–Lakeshore’s economic centres, yet it has remained all but vacant since the theatre closed in 1998. This new courthouse will be the beginning of revitalizing an area that may one day be a new hub of activity in our community.

A new courthouse represents a major opportunity for investment in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. It will relieve the pressure on the Toronto courts by providing increased accessibility to meet judicial needs for years to come. As well, it will be a green building designed to meet LEED silver standards in efficiency.

I want to thank the Attorney General, whom I joined, with our local councillor, Peter Milczyn, on April 7 to announce plans for the future Toronto courthouse.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LE REPORT DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à accorder des reports d’impôts fonciers aux personnes âgées à faible revenu et aux personnes à faible revenu atteintes d’une invalidité.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes. This is a reincarnation of a bill that was debated last year and failed on second reading. I took copious notes at that time and have addressed what members felt were the deficiencies. I’ve also taken advantage of the new rules that allow for co-sponsorship, and I’m happy to say that I have a co-sponsor in the member from York West and another in the member from Welland.

This is a timely bill; it was last year but even more so now as seniors seek to take advantage of anything that would allow them to maintain their homes in times when financial pressures are at their greatest.

I hope all members will pay attention to this bill and get involved in the debate in a couple of weeks.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Hon. David Caplan: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon. David Caplan: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 30th annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees and that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to attend the 2009 annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Caplan has moved that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 30th annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees and that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to attend the 2009 annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Hon. David Caplan: I believe we also have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of the chief medical officer of health and that up to two minutes be allotted to a member of each party to introduce and congratulate the new chief medical officer of health.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon. David Caplan: To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Dr. Arlene King as the chief medical officer of health for the province of Ontario as provided in section 81 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, RSO 1990, chapter H.7, to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act commencing on June 15, 2009;

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Caplan has moved that Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Dr. Arlene King as the chief medical officer of health for the province of Ontario as provided in section 81 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, RSO 1990, chapter H.7, to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act commencing on June 15, 2009;

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to thank all members, first of all, for consenting and also for agreeing to the appointment of the new chief medical officer of health. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce Dr. King—please stand, Dr. King—who is in the Speaker's gallery. Seated beside Dr. King is Dr. David Williams. I will speak about Dr. Williams, but Dr. Williams, I would like to acknowledge you and the incredible job that you've done. Please stand as well and be recognized by the Legislature.

I would like to address the House on the appointment of Dr. Arlene King as Ontario's new chief medical officer of health effective June 15, 2009. As members know, Dr. King was selected by a special committee of this Legislature made up of representatives from all three political parties. I'm delighted to have Dr. King join the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and I truly look forward to working in close collaboration with her. She brings an enormous wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise to this position. The list of her numerous accomplishments, publications and honours runs literally to many pages. Dr. King is an internationally recognized expert in immunization, infectious diseases and pandemic preparedness. Her particular area of expertise will be especially relevant to the challenges faced by Ontario, the largest public health system in our country. Ontario is indeed fortunate to have a public health leader of Dr. King's calibre serving the people of our province.

1320

At this time, I'd also like to acknowledge Dr. David Williams, who has acted as chief medical officer of health since November 2007. I've had the pleasure of working quite closely with Dr. Williams since my appointment some 10 months ago, and I can tell all members of this assembly that Dr. Williams has made a significant and tremendous contribution to the province's public health system, especially during last summer's listeriosis outbreak. I want to thank him on behalf of the people of Ontario, and I want to thank you personally, Dr. Williams, for your dedication and commitment to the public's health. I am pleased that Dr. Williams will continue to serve as associate chief medical officer of health.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I certainly want to join with the Minister of Health in welcoming Dr. Arlene King here today, and also in expressing my appreciation to Dr. David Williams. Welcome, and thank you very much.

I had the privilege to sit on the committee that made the decision to hire Dr. King, and I can tell you that there was unanimous support for the credentials and experience she brings to the position. I have no doubt that she will be a strong public health leader not only in the province of Ontario, but I am very confident, based on the wealth and breadth of experience she has, that she will be a leader of leaders throughout Canada. So welcome, and we're pleased you're coming to Ontario. I can tell you that it's a great province.

I have had the privilege of working with Dr. David Williams since I was Minister of Health, beginning back in 1997. At that time, David, I think you were up in Thunder Bay. That was our first opportunity to get acquainted. I was impressed with Dr. Williams at that time, and I continue to be impressed with the contribution he has made to improving public health for people in the province of Ontario. He has always put the interests of the people of this province above his own interests, and he has certainly gone far above the call that was required of him to do everything he could to protect and promote the health of our citizens.

The minister made reference to the outbreak last year, and he is certainly to be commended for his very, very capable leadership. I know that he's not going away, and for that we are really grateful. I just want you to know we appreciate the fact that, at a time when the Ministry of Health was desperately looking for someone to assume this leadership role—and I would say that the protection of the public is certainly one of the most important leadership roles in our province—Dr. Williams was there, stepped in and filled that position. I can tell you that it is a difficult position to assume; there's a tremendous amount of responsibility. So I want to thank you very much, Dr. Williams, for the very strong, effective leadership you have provided, and for what I know has been your genuine commitment to the people of the province of Ontario. Thank you so much.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to be able to speak about the new chief medical officer of health, Dr. Arlene King. Welcome. But before I do, I want to thank the outgoing chief medical officer of health, Dr. David Williams, for his dedicated service to public health in our province. Dr. Williams faced some daunting challenges during his term, and certainly rose to meet them, working above and beyond the call of duty. For this, everybody in Ontario is grateful to you, Dr. Williams.

I had the honour to sit on the interview committee for the position of chief medical officer of health, and I was impressed. Dr. Arlene King is well prepared to deal with pandemic outbreaks, communicable disease outbreaks, and the social determinants of health. You name it, she has worked with it. She is a good communicator. I liked both her skills and her style of communication, and she has good French-language speaking skills, which is

something near and dear to me. She understands the challenges of people living in the north, having lived and worked in northern Alberta, and she has an abundance of leadership experience. I was truly impressed with her understanding of the social determinants of health, the fact that people living in poverty have more health problems, and the threats to public health with the obesity epidemic.

Dr. King will have some challenges to face, but I'm sure she will be up to the task. Some of the challenge remains that a third of our public health units don't have a permanent medical officer of health, but I have confidence that she will set the stage to fix this.

In closing, welcome, bienvenue, Dr. King. Merci, thank you, Dr. Williams.

PETITIONS

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have a petition today from Colleen Allen, who lives on Park Hill Road West in Peterborough, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Alexis.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of—I guess they're in the gallery; Jan and Joe O'Neil, John Vanderhorst and Lynn McCullough—GenMo salaried pension organization. The petition reads as follows:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government has stated that they are not going to honour their previous commitment to fund the pension benefit guarantee fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas GM contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the PBGF; and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility (regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail' legislation), which permitted GM to underfund" said pension "fund; and

"Whereas regulation 5.1, as amended, allowed GM an extended period to fully fund the pension fund;

"Therefore, GM employees, retirees and surviving spouses have been exposed to considerable risk, and since General Motors is the only company still affected by regulation 5.1, its employees, retirees and surviving spouses are treated differently than any other employee, retiree or surviving spouse in Ontario; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy; and

"Whereas, if GM goes bankrupt, stakeholders such as vendors and suppliers know the risk to business; retirees and surviving spouses were not aware of potential risks; and the market decline and their age, health and ability for re-employment restricts their opportunity to offset their income or recover their losses; and

1330

"Whereas GM's salaried employees contributed a percentage of their annual income to pension plan 0340950 and were permitted only limited contributions to RRSPs due to the federal government's CRA discretionary RRSP restriction for defined benefit plan members; and

"Whereas the provincial government budgeted \$10.6 billion of taxpayers' money to replenish their own government employees' pension plan;

"Now therefore GenMo has petitioned the Legislative Assembly to recognize GenMo's salaried pension organization as the legal representative of all pensioners who are members of registered plan 0340950, being the salaried employees, retirees and survivors' spouses of General Motors of Canada; and

"GenMo hereby petitions the Legislative Assembly to honour its commitment to totally fund the PBGF; and

"That in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made that General Motors fully fund pension plan 0340950, and that General Motors continue to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with employment entitlements and the retirement agreement; and

"That the Legislative Assembly do due diligence and amend regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail,' to protect all employees and retirees of General Motors of Canada; and

"That the provincial government support amending the federal legislation, being the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) to permit pensioners super-claimancy status."

This is prepared by Jan and Joe O'Neil and members of the GenMo organization. I'm pleased to sign it, submit it and support it on their behalf.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

I would affix my signature and send it with the page.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this petition into the House, which I've done on a number of occasions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm proud to sign this petition in support.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: I have an excellent petition here. It reads as follows:

"Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salary pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail' legislation) which permitted GM to underfund the pension benefits guarantee fund; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo salaried pension organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the pension benefits guarantee fund; and

"That, in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made that General Motors fully fund pension plan 0340950 and" that General Motors "continues to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with its retirement commitments; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect" GM pensioners.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to one of the pages, Robyn.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Based on the news coming out of Vaughan today, I'm introducing a petition. It says:

"Whereas Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has the highest average ticket revenue per game in the National Hockey League; and

"Whereas the Toronto Maple Leafs are ranked the most financially valuable team in the NHL; and

"Whereas many Hamilton and greater Toronto area hockey fans are unable to attend professional hockey games due to a lack of adequate ticket supply; and

"Whereas the Hamilton and greater Toronto area boast the biggest and best market in the world for hockey fans, with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment bringing approximately \$2.4 billion to the local economy over 10 years; and

"Whereas a new franchise in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area is valued at \$600 million by some economists; and

"Whereas competition in both business and sports is healthy for both the Hamilton and greater Toronto area economy and sports team performance; and

"Whereas, despite having the most loyal fans in the world, the Toronto Maple Leafs have not won the Stanley Cup in over 40 years; and

"Whereas Hamilton and greater Toronto area fans deserve competitive professional hockey teams;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the government of the province of Ontario express its strong support to the board of governors of the National Hockey League for the relocation or expansion of a second NHL hockey team in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area in order to realize the economic advantages to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and to provide healthy competition to the existing Toronto NHL franchise."

I agree with this completely and will sign it.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a petition here on behalf of vulnerable foreign workers, and this is a petition of hundreds of names from Laval, from across the province of Quebec, in support of protecting our foreign caregivers.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a number of foreign ... caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; "and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support my good friends from la belle province, I support the caregivers and I affix my name to this petition.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today that's been submitted to me by Sister Eileen McManus, who is a member of the Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peterborough.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Lindsay.

1340

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and

"Whereas the average annual PM2.5 concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry's air quality index monitoring stations; and...

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and...

"Whereas annual average 24-hour nitrogen dioxide concentrations were found to be among the highest when compared to provincial air quality index stations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas; and...

"Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I will sign and provide it to Alexis.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Mike Colle: I have more petitions from people who support recognition of Tom Longboat.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tom Longboat is one of Canada's greatest long-distance runners; and...

"Whereas Tom Longboat served his country in World War I with distinction and was wounded twice; and

"Whereas Tom Longboat is a great role model for all Canadians; and

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tom Longboat Day Act into law so that we can honour this remarkable athlete and

courageous Canadian, who is a great role model for all Canadians.”

I support the Tom Longboat Day Act, and I affix my name to this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time allowed for petitions has expired.

I do remind members, at least those who are here, that when it comes to petitions, you can always summarize long petitions and get to the real meat of it, and the full text will still be filed with the Clerk. In consideration of your fellow members, I know you will keep that in mind.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (PROTECTION FOR ARTISTS), 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (PROTECTION DES ARTISTES)

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to artists / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui a trait aux artistes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Tabuns moves second reading of Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to artists.

Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Tabuns, you have up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to rise today to address my private member's bill, Bill 165, for the protection of artists. The bill, as people can see, is extraordinarily simple. It aims to accomplish what should be obvious and what is much needed as a step forward for Ontario's artists. The bill is about ensuring that Ontarians who make their living in the arts and culture sector are entitled to the same basic employment standards as workers in every other sector across this province.

Currently, artists are excluded from the protection offered by the Employment Standards Act simply because the definition of “employee” used in this act is far too narrow and excludes them. I'd ask anyone in this House how they could argue that artists shouldn't be entitled to the same protections—a minimum rate of pay, vacation with pay, overtime etc.—that other Ontario workers enjoy.

I want to note that in 2006, the report of the Minister's Advisory Council for Arts and Culture pointed out that in other jurisdictions, including France and Belgium, “many artists are deemed to be employees for purposes of labour standards and social benefits.” This is not a concept that

is out of keeping with other practices in the world and, in particular, jurisdictions that are very concerned about preserving, promoting and maintaining their culture.

The bill is about ensuring basic protection in the workplace and in the work that artists do while also protecting the status of an artist as an independent contractor, something that's fundamental to an artist's employment status. The reality is that artists need both of those things: protection as an employee and, because of the economic realities we face in this society, the maintenance of their independent contractor position so that the taxes they pay reflect far more nearly the episodic nature of the work that they're engaged in—the uncertain nature of the work that they are engaged in.

Passage of this bill will start to fulfill the McGuinty government's long-standing promise to artists. That is implementing status-of-the-artist provisions, even if it's done on a piece-by-piece basis. This isn't a comprehensive act. There are many other elements that have to be put in place, but at least in getting things rolling and bringing in one part of the necessary legislative changes, this act will be very useful. The bill will strengthen the arts and culture sector and ensure that its workers are treated fairly.

It is simply the right thing to do. Ontario has a very rich arts sector, and we want to keep it that way. I say to everyone in the House: If you want to preserve a critical mass of performers and creators in this province, then they have to be treated fairly. They have to have an income that reflects what they contribute to our society. If we want to maintain them here rather than losing them to the United States, something that happens very commonly, we have to make sure that they are treated and recompensed fairly. If we have that critical mass retained here in Ontario, we have the ability to draw other people into that creative process and make Ontario a richer and more vibrant place.

Across Canada, there are 140,000 people who list art as their major occupation; 40% of these people are Ontarians. Ontario has double the number of artists living in our province compared to any other province across the country. The overall contribution of the arts to the Canadian economy was over \$84 billion in 2007, \$46 billion of that in direct contributions. To give you a sense of scale, the mining sector in Ontario generates somewhere around \$11 billion to \$12 billion worth of revenue. The arts are a very large part of our economy and our society. Because of Ontario's dominant arts sector, most of this income went into our provincial economy. These are big numbers. They represent significant impact.

But in spite of that hefty contribution, the statistics on this contribution, there's another story when it comes to the livelihood of those making up the industry. When we look at the statistics of whether this huge economic contribution actually benefits the very people making up the industry, a very disturbing answer appears. Artists in Ontario earn, on average, 38% less than other workers. As acknowledged by the Minister of Culture's own advisory council in 2006, the average annual earnings of

Ontario artists is about \$26,000, almost one quarter less than the overall labour force in Ontario. Artists in many Ontario cities earn less than \$20,000 per year despite the fact that the percentage of artists with post-secondary qualifications is nearly double that of the overall workforce. The nature of work in the arts and culture sector results in 44% of Ontario artists being self-employed, compared to 7% of the overall labour force.

All of these factors and statistics mean that without strong government supports, our arts cannot thrive; they cannot prosper. These statistics mean that without changes like those offered in Bill 165, these workers, these creators, these people who contribute profoundly to our economy will continue to face poor working conditions, and we will face destabilization of this essential sector.

Perhaps most disturbing, the economic situation for artists overall is only getting worse. Although the earnings of the average worker have steadily increased over the last 15 years, the average earnings of artists have been steadily decreasing. It's clear that we need action in order to close this gap.

1350

We need to ask ourselves what the value of arts is to our community. Without doubt, there's direct economic application, but the arts inspire us; they shape our lives; they shape our outlook. In fact, the arts shape the look, the language and the thought of whole sectors, of whole eras. When you think of the style of architecture in a particular time and you think of the language and the way we think about things, profoundly, all of that has been shaped by the arts community and by the individual artists out there working in performance, in painting, in sculpture, literature, writing. You've got a whole range of people who shape the very way that we conceive of the world, the very way that we see it.

We need those people here in Canada, here in Ontario, to define our personality, to help define what we think is important in the world and allow us to express what we think is important in the world.

Without a strong arts community, our tourism sector would suffer. Think of places like Stratford, like Blyth, Ontario—a fairly small place with a summer theatre festival that's well attended. Toronto, with its theatres and art galleries, needs a strong arts community.

There's a reality that there is a continuum of the arts, an ecology of the arts, with individual artists creating, shaping, performing, using their own voices, their own bodies, to create and extend messages to us, and their work is the foundation for other sectors, for mass entertainment that in and of itself generates huge amounts of revenue, but the artists don't get that: artists who work in small independent films like *DNA*; not an independent film, *Niagara*, that was made here in Ontario a number of years ago; or the very successful series *Flashpoint* on CTV. There's a whole continuum of the arts and a whole continuum of artists out there doing the work that has to be done.

I want to note right now that we're joined by a number of members of ACTRA, people who have been speaking

out for the arts: Art Hindle, Wendy Crewson, Austin Schatz, John Nelles, David Gale and—my goodness, Norm MacAskill is not here. Janesse? Anyway, the people here in the members' gallery are here, and they were here earlier in this week, speaking about the need to protect arts and the artists, not just for themselves but for the economy and the social fabric of this province.

We understand, not just in the NDP but in other parties, that the arts are an inherent part of what we are as human beings; they express our cultures, express our personalities. We're concerned that even though the government may understand that, they are not making the steps, not taking the actions necessary, to provide the comprehensive support that Ontario's artists and Ontario's arts community need.

There was a promise made by the McGuinty government to introduce status-of-the-artist legislation, and the reality was a bill introduced in 2007 that was a huge disappointment. It created a weekend in June to celebrate artists. I have to say, you have to wonder why you would even do that. Why didn't you just say, "No, we're not going to introduce it"? That was an insignificant response.

The minister has spoken before and said, "Ontario's talented artists and arts organizations are vital to the growth of the province's creative economy. Investment in the arts helps strengthen the sector, stimulates the economy and creates jobs." That was April 21, Aileen Carroll.

Having said that, you need to follow through. You need to provide the financial support, the legal support, the support showing that clearly arts are of consequence to this government and this province.

When I met with members of ACTRA earlier this week, there were three main issues they were concerned with: implementation of a collective bargaining process for the arts sector, the subject of another debate; amending the Employment Standards Act to include artists, the issue before us today; and institution of legally binding regulations that can protect child actors. All members of the House should know that it is these changes that are needed to determine the quality of life for artists, their working conditions and the likelihood of a career in the arts. Ontario's artists need these changes. They should not be forced to make sacrifices to ensure that we have a viable arts sector in Ontario. They should not be in a situation where their working conditions discourage others.

I call on all members of this House to vote in favour of my private member's bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm happy to have the opportunity to stand today in the Legislature and join the debate on the member for Toronto-Danforth's private member's bill, Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to artists.

Our government values the contributions of the close to 57,000 professional artists in Ontario. Artists play an important role in building a strong, prosperous economy.

They make an invaluable contribution to the quality of life in their communities across Ontario, as well as nationally and internationally.

The Ministry of Culture champions a number of initiatives that support artists in Ontario. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has increased funding to the Ontario Arts Council by \$20 million, bringing the OAC's annual budget to almost \$60 million. This represents a 140% increase to the OAC since 2003. In 2007-08, the OAC funded 1,300 individual artists and 875 organizations in 252 communities across Ontario. Our government's 2009 budget proposes an additional investment of \$30 million in the Ontario Media Development Corp. to support Ontario's film and television industry as it competes domestically and internationally.

The member from Toronto-Danforth has proposed, under Bill 165, to amend the Employment Standards Act. We must be clear on what he is proposing.

Currently, the Employment Standards Act provides minimum standards for an employment relationship between employees and employers. For example, an artist who is an employee is covered by the Employment Standards Act and its minimum standards for wage, public holidays, termination pay and vacation pay. Bill 165 is asking for the Employment Standards Act to reach beyond an employment relationship and govern commercial contracts. Bill 165 is proposing that the Employment Standards Act govern independent contractors; in other words, individuals who are not employees. We're not talking about artists who are employees, because, as I just mentioned, they are already covered under the Employment Standards Act. Instead, we are talking about artists who are independent contractors, independent contractors who have special status over employees when it comes to copyright and taxation rights.

Unlike employees, artists who are independent contractors are able to access different tax rules and write off expenses not available to an employee. The Employment Standards Act is clear in its definition of who is an employee and who is an employer. These are tests used to determine whether an individual is an employee and therefore comes under the Employment Standards Act.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has a proven track record of amending and revising the Employment Standards Act to address emerging trends in the workplace that impact employees. Here are some examples: We have increased the minimum wage annually since 2004, extended family medical leave to include more relatives, created Family Day, and created job protection leave for military reservists.

The McGuinty government has already introduced proposed amendments to two other important issues under the Employment Standards Act. We proposed amendments to provide greater protections for temporary help agency employees and proposed a three-month job-protection leave when an employee wishes to donate an organ.

1400

The McGuinty government's decision to introduce greater protections for temporary help agency employees

is a great example of ensuring that employees in an employment relationship have adequate protections. It is evident to me, to Minister Fonseca and to the McGuinty government that the general protections in the Employment Standards Act were not sufficient for the problems faced by temporary help agencies.

I had the pleasure to meet stakeholders last summer to hear about the issues facing temporary help agency employees prior to the introduction of Bill 139. The key is that the Employment Standards Act should focus on employment relationships. The government has demonstrated that it will respond and propose changes to the Employment Standards Act when issues emerge in employment relationships.

This is quite different from what the member from Toronto-Danforth is asking for through his Bill 165. He is asking to radically alter the scope of the Employment Standards Act to cover independent contractors. He is asking the Employment Standards Act to cover non-employees. This proposal would see the Employment Standards Act expanded to include artists, who are not employees. I believe this proposal is unwarranted.

This government has demonstrated that it is a friend to artists, whether they are employees or independent contractors. This government has provided a variety of mechanisms and programs to champion Ontario's artist community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened quite attentively on Mr. Tabuns's bill—

Mr. Mike Colle: You just got here.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did read it when he introduced the bill. That remains the depth of my knowledge, you could say. But I think the intent of what he's trying to achieve here, as I look for the bill, is important: protecting artists.

I'm familiar—I have a copy. It's a very small bill; actually, it's about one paragraph—no, it's more than that, because it's in two languages.

Just to make sure that we understand the explanatory notes—some members have other things they're doing today—"The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000 by adding and amending several definitions. The definition of 'employee' is amended to include artists, and the definition of 'employer' is amended accordingly. Definitions of the terms 'artist' and 'dependent contractor' are also added."

I understand fully, having members of—not my immediate family; they're artistic in different ways, I guess, but I have a nephew who's on TV. You know, it's very precarious. He's actually either in the news or out of the news. It's more like a politician, really. We're either in office or out of office, and it's a pretty risky business. We don't have any coverage from the employment standards. I look at Mr. Phillips. He's been here for longer than I have—very deserving, and a minister as well. There's no protection.

Some would say that this particular activity is partially theatrical. Really—I mean, I'm not trivializing what we do. We are taught—and I'm speaking to artists today, and I do respect the work you do. I'll make sure I leave that on the record. But when you're in a role which is primarily—Mr. Tabuns is an extremely respectable fellow. He did very well in the leadership thing and I think brings a lot to the Legislature. But more importantly, this job is really about communication. As such, there is a parallel for what you do. In communications, we're told that when you're communicating—maybe you could speak to me after, if I'm wrong on this—it's about 20% what you say and 80% how you look. Imagine that. We're discussing legislative, technical things, whether it's the Highway Traffic Act amendments that were passed yesterday, Bill 118—which I had a role in; Minister Bradley even mentioned that.

This bill is an issue ultimately about fairness for artists. I'm not trying to trivialize it; I'm just trying to say that that is a skill, the communication skill, in whatever medium you talk of, whether it's in music, instrumental music, theatre, dance, the written word, all the various forms of art.

We need art to enrich our lives, especially in times like these. When we see the economy crashing around our ears and the demonstration out here today, that's theatre right there. That is theatre. Michael Moore would probably be out there today recording that, to say that Dalton McGuinty is failing the people of Ontario. Now, that's theatre, but it's politics.

The parallel that I'm trying to draw today would be to say that artists are important contributors—probably more important than most politicians—to society, the civility of society, and the hope and joy of society. Right now, there's a lack of hope and joy, and maybe we need art more than ever in these times.

What they need is the security to continue their craft and what this affords them in some measure by these amendments to the Employment Standards Act, which have attached to that certain entitlements.

I want to wrap up. There aren't many speakers on our side here today. It's very lonely at the top; I feel like the Maytag man. Really, it's just that maybe they trust me, that I am able to carry the debate on my own. I am probably going to support it, because Mr. Tabuns does great work here, and so I want to leave that on the message as well.

But I want to get back to the fundamentals of what it's trying to do. My undergraduate degree was in labour economics. I studied at the University of Toronto, and John Crispo was the professor, a very well-published, brilliant guy. I did learn the issues of roles and duties of the employers and employees. You need certain statutes to cling to, because not everyone is organized by a union.

There are union issues involved here, and the guilds, I guess they call them, need to be out on the front lawn on occasion. They need to act out to make their point and to get what they call their message across, by acting, and probably on some occasions you have acted out. I can

remember being part of the Mike Harris government; there was some acting-out going on then, let me assure you. Now, did it achieve its objective? Well, I suspect it just shows how important the theatrical component of public demonstration is. I see that every night when I watch the CBC—hacking Stephen Harper apart, usually.

My point is this: I would not deny a person's right to make the demonstration. That is not the point. The point I'm actually making is a philosophical reference, I suppose; it doesn't get much deeper than that. But it's this: I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend your right to say it. And saying it is not just in words; it's in actions, deeds and other mediums.

This is a bill that I think would be supported, and I think Mr. Tabuns's whole history of what he brings from Greenpeace before he got here would be respectable. It's not always something that I would agree with, because I'm sort of from that very—Liberals would say “primitive level,” but in my case, I would say that I come from the point of view of: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” I would say I could be laughed at, but it doesn't affect me, only to make this point of: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?”

In the case of this debate here, we want to make sure that we have a good economy. So a Conservative would say to you that we have to have a strong economy, we have to have competitive tax rules and we have to have a level playing field. Why? We need that to encourage investment. We can see what is happening in Ontario now. I don't blame it all on Premier McGuinty for sure, but he is in charge. He's got the gold key, and he's got the combination to the vault.

The point is this: If you want to look around the world today where there's upheaval and uncertainty—perhaps Afghanistan or Pakistan might be a case in point—there is no order. There's no economy; if there is, it's a black economy based on uncertain things. Perhaps in Afghanistan, it may even be opium or something like that.

1410

But my point is that a Conservative would say you have to have a strong economy to support a strong quality of life. You can't have a strong quality of life without an economy. That's the fundamental basic. As I said earlier, in a self-deprecating sort of way, you have to believe in certain principles. This is where we differ in the ideology scale. But what you do with the wealth gets me back to the point here: It's important to have civility and culture in society. You need those kinds of things, those investors in culture and society. Garth Drabinsky and those other people, some of them serving time, were the great builders of culture.

So in the brief time I have, this bill is a pretty simple bill. As I said, you could probably sum it up in two minutes, but the time has to be used. It's the Employment Standards Act amending two words and definitions. I'll probably be supporting it because I do support the arts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had some notes here of what I was going to say, but having listened to the member from

Brampton West, I feel compelled to speak about what I think of the arts. Clearly, what he was enunciating is that the arts are a form of employment and whether or not the good people who are artists work as contractors or as employees for someone else. I think, quite frankly, with the greatest of respect, he has missed the boat.

The whole issue is, what do they do for us as a society? What do artists contribute to all of us? Do they work for the CBC or a corporation? Do they work for an insurance company? Do they work for themselves or do they work for all of us? I would have to say without a shadow of a doubt in my mind that they work for all of us. They help to define who we are as Canadians; they help to define who we are as people, as North Americans; they help to define our entire society. They are who we are, and they give expression to that feeling of how wonderful it is to be from this place.

I've had an opportunity over the last few weeks to go to many arts events, some of them big, some small, to see artists young and old trying to contribute to this society. I went to a very moving event which was art done by children at R.H. McGregor school and saw the paintings that they prepared and the wonder of their art, how they used hands and spray-painted over the hands, which reminded me of going back to the Chauvet caves in France and northern Spain, where you can go back 20,000 and 30,000 years to see the same art technique. I saw them trying to draw and to give expression to their young lives, and it was amazing, and how it was appreciated by the adults who had come to that show.

I'm going this coming weekend to the Don Valley Art Club, where they are going to prepare art, some of which will be for sale. It's people who live in our community, who try to give expression to the area around the Don Valley, to the river, to the natural environment, and what they do to give expression to our community.

The Beaches Art Walk is on this week, and I was there at the beginning of that to see some of the culture that is being presented and how they are so expressive of what it is to live in the Beach. Every summer I go down to the Beach jazz festival to listen to music, not only because I like the music, but I want to hear what Canadians are producing, what Canadian music is all about.

I go to the McMichael collection whenever I get a chance to see some of the great artists of the world, artists who are absolutely unique, that you can't see in the United States, that you can't see in Europe, that you can't see in Australia. I go to their art galleries too, but when I go to McMichael, I see something that's absolutely unique.

When I watch television and film, I see Canadian-produced films and Canadian-produced programs that talk about me, that talk about our society, that talk about our culture, that talk about life in Toronto and in Ontario. I see something that is absolutely unique that I don't see on American television. I am proud of all of that.

So when you ask me, "Who do they work for? Do they work for a contractor or the CBC?"—I guess that might be who pays them. Do they sell some of their work to

individuals? Yes, they do. I have bought some paintings. My house, in fact, is filled with them. "Do they work for themselves?" All of that is true, but they work for all of us. That's what's being missed here. That's what's being missed when the member from Brampton West stands up and asks the question he asked: "Are they contractors or are they employees?" What they are are Canadians who are trying to make this a better place. And what can we do in this bill? We have to do a lot more than we have done in the past for artists.

In the entire history of humankind, both prehistory and today, you can go back, and what distinguishes human beings from others who came before us is that we are artists. You can look at the difference between Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal, and the difference between the two groups is that the Cro-Magnon used body art. They left art. They painted themselves. They buried their dead with jewellery. That's the difference. Artists are who we are, and to deny that and to state that it's a contractor or an employee is absolutely wrong. I am asking the members opposite to think about this, to think about this bill and how we can protect and help artists.

Literally every culture in the history of this earth since recorded time has produced great artists and they have, as societies, gone out of their way to help the artist to produce. Whether they be in China, whether they be in India, whether they be the first flowerings of civilization in Iran and Iraq, in all of those places it was the artist who was given predominance and it is the artist's work that survives today to tell us what those societies were like and what they were about. It is how we understand our history and whence this whole human place, this planet earth, comes from.

The artists are asking a couple of simple things. There's a letter I have from ACTRA which was sent to the minister. I just want to quote two things. It says: "The Status of Ontario's Artists Act, 2007, was introduced as part of the budget bill in the spring of 2007. While the act recognized the importance of Ontario's artists and identified the first weekend in June as Celebrate the Artist Weekend, it did not do anything to actually improve the lives of artists."

I take my mind's eye back to that time because I was in the House when this was debated, when we were talking about this when it was part of the budget bill. I am, after all, the finance critic for the NDP and I remember when it was sent to the finance committee for further discussion—people came to discuss the contents, about artists—and the lament that was palpable in that committee about how absolutely nothing was done for artists. The bill passed, and other than setting aside a weekend in June, nothing was done to improve their lives. They have come back again today, and in the letter they're asking for the same three things that they asked for in 2007 that I think are absolutely essential for us as Canadians and Ontarians and people who want to celebrate all that the arts do for us in terms of our lives.

They have asked for these three things and they're contained, in fact, on the first page: "ACTRA Toronto

has asked the Minister of Labour to take three important measures that would ensure Ontario artists have the same opportunities as other workers:

“(1) Establish a new collective bargaining regime to provide a legal framework within which artists’ organizations can negotiate with producers and engagers.

“(2) Amend the Employment Standards Act to include artists.

“(3) Bring into force legislation or regulations to provide protections for child performers by law.”

I think they all make pretty much sense. Artists earn only about 75% of the average wage in Ontario. They make 75% of the average wage, the average wage being around \$36,000; they earn about \$25,000. That’s what they earn, but they do it for the love of their art. They do it so that all of us can appreciate what they are contributing to this society. They do it in order to push the boundaries of Canadian culture and to make us proud of who and what we are. I think we need to make sure that they have the wherewithal to continue to provide that wonderful resource upon which we have come to rely.

1420

I don’t think it’s too much to ask that they’re paid a decent wage, and I don’t think it’s too much to allow them a mechanism to negotiate to have better lives so that they can in fact continue to produce. The old adage of an artist living and dying in the garret is not one of which we should be proud.

The second one is to amend the Employment Standards Act to include artists. All they’re asking here is, very simply, to be included with other workers. They understand that they work; they understand that they produce; they understand that they are producing a commodity, in many cases, that is saleable. But they want to be treated the same as other workers. I don’t believe that that is difficult to understand.

But in my last two minutes I want to talk about the last one, because this is particularly problematic to me. They want to bring into force legislation or regulation to provide protection for child performers by law. One of the very few places that we allow children under the age of 10 or 12 to work—outside of this Legislature, with the young people who work here for a few weeks—is in the arts. We need them. We need them to perform in plays. We need them to perform in films and in television. We need them to sing sometimes for productions because they are part of our society. They are the young and the future and we need to develop their talents. We must make sure that those children are protected. We stand up as a society—and I can hear it oftentimes in here, or people talking on the streets, or my friends when they talk about the heinous conditions in which children are forced to work around the world, whether it be in the mines, whether it be tying knots in rugs in Iran or Afghanistan, or whether it be children forced to do labour in order to survive on the streets of India. We hear about those things. We hear Craig Kielburger and his brother when they talk about the horrendous conditions.

But we have conditions in this province that need to be protected. I’m not saying that the children are abused, but

I am saying that we need to provide protection for those children, first of all so that they are allowed to make sure they have the opportunity to continue to go to school; secondly, that they have the opportunity to keep the monies they earn and that they’re not siphoned off by family or agents or other people, so that they are protected in their older age; and thirdly, and I think just as importantly, that they have the strength of having a group looking after them to make sure that their interests are paramount throughout it all.

I am asking the members to vote for this. I am asking you to vote for this not because it’s a contractor versus an employee, but I’m asking you to vote for it because it’s the right thing to do to protect our most valuable asset.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I’m very pleased to speak on this subject today and to share some of my thoughts with the members of this House. I also want to thank and welcome the members of the arts community who are here with us today.

I want to offer a personal perspective. I am fortunate enough to have been married for over 30 years now to a visual artist, and over these years, I’ve had the opportunity to meet many artists. I have many friends in the artistic community. I’m also well aware of their precarious financial position, even in the best of economic times. I’ve also worked in the broadcasting field for many years, and I’ve noticed some parallels between that field and the artistic community at large. Often, people in the film and television industry are self-employed, they work on a contract basis, and do not enjoy the benefits of a predictable, steady income.

Also, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture, I have learned even more about the profound impact that artists have on Ontario’s economy and our quality of life. As we heard before, artists provide an insight into who we are. They stimulate our imagination on an everyday basis and they challenge us to look at the world in a different way.

They also account for a significant share of our economic growth. The culture sector generates, as we’ve heard, \$46 billion for Ontario. I believe that it accounts for more than 250,000 jobs in our province.

Although artists contribute so much in such a significant way to our economy, their income is often not steady and they are not able to plan for their lives as one usually would. Their fiscal situation is often uncertain.

The average artist earns around \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year, although they work all year round. They work all the time but their income does not reflect their efforts. I’ll give you an example. My husband will work for an art show and he will succeed in selling some paintings. He may have three or four art shows during a year; some years more, some years less. The income is not always steady. Especially if you’re raising a family, especially if you have children, if you want to have a normal life, it’s hard to predict what that income is going to be year after year. Yet the artist has worked all year round. He hasn’t

worked only for that period of time when he's having that show.

Although they're continuously practising their art, their income has an unusual pattern, either because they're self-employed or on commission. Also, they don't contribute, let's say, to Canada pension, as other employees do. In the television field, this happens also to cameramen, editors, videographers and technical assistants. As independent contractors, they are often unable to provide for themselves and their families in periods when they're off work.

I also want to mention that in York South-Weston I see the role that art can play in making a difference in young people's lives, especially for those who live in challenged neighbourhoods. This can keep them off the streets and inspire them. Their talent can grow into a full profession. This is something that I believe we should all support as a society.

I want to conclude with the thought that if we consider this idea that creative forces benefit the society as a whole, it's only fair that artists have to be able to have a better financial outlook for their lives and have the tools to achieve a better situation during their working lives and in their retirement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. In regard to this, I realize the intent of what is taking place but I have some concerns. Hopefully the member will be able to elaborate and alleviate some of the concerns that I have regarding this issue.

When you're talking about the direction of the bill, certainly the intent is very clear. However, when the actual workings take place—it specifically states that an artist is “in any field of artistic endeavour, and includes a person who ... performs, sings, recites, directs or acts, in any manner.”

For example, the students who were just with us and are just leaving now—what happens in the case of a high school play? They certainly can be found under those guidelines, in that many of those high school plays remunerate funds in order to recoup the costs of putting on plays in a school. I'm certain that is not the member's intent.

Or what happens with the Durham symphony, when they bring performing artists in from other jurisdictions? We have had a number of world-renowned individuals who have come in, have been brought in, from Poland and other jurisdictions to do one performance at the Durham symphony in Oshawa. What would be the intent or the impact there?

There are other areas I have some concerns about that I'd hope they would be able to expand on, such as the Oshawa Little Theatre, for example. What would happen with the Oshawa Little Theatre? What would take place with the individuals performing on that basis, where sometimes they come in as students, or not, or if they participate in any way, shape or form?

Lastly, another aspect that I think needs to be addressed is—for example, when my sister was going

through school, she was working part-time in the musical at Canada's Wonderland for summertime employment. How would this play out with those individuals? How would it affect them?

Quite clearly, we're hearing large support for actors and artistic value in our communities. We need to ensure that when the legislation comes forward, all of the impacts are addressed in the fashion that the member has intended. Hopefully, he will be able to address those issues and, quite possibly through a committee process, be able to expand on where it can and cannot work.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I guess my colleague left me just a few minutes to speak. Not actually a few minutes—one minute and 20 seconds. I want to take the opportunity to welcome the artists with us here in the gallery.

I also want to echo my colleagues who spoke in support of this bill. I listened to the member from Beaches-East York when he was talking about how many different cultures through history were measured by their artists. You know, we still remember Shakespeare; we still remember the Mona Lisa, the picture. We remember many different artists throughout history because they produced and left something behind. Their artwork and their productions are still a great indication of the continuation of our history.

In the few seconds, I want to say that it is a very important step forward, to see how we can support artists, even though I know it's a huge issue and very complex. We don't have exact definitions of who is going to be the artist, who is going to be included, because many people do the artistic stuff aside, while they're working, and not as a full-time job.

But in the end, I think it's our commitment as a government, as a society, as a culture to pay tribute to those people and give them the support they need to continue to produce for future generations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Tabuns, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Before I go any further, I have to correct an omission. I should have introduced Janesse Leung at the beginning. Thank you, Janesse, for being here.

To my colleagues who spoke: Member from Beaches-East York, you were particularly eloquent. Thank you. That was great. The member from York South-Weston, I appreciated your perspective.

Similarly, the member from Durham, who—those who are regulars here understand that he has a stream-of-consciousness style that very few others can replicate. James Joyce and Ulysses come to mind, I have to say. Nonetheless, he seemed to be leaning towards the bill, and I appreciate that.

The member for Brampton West—I disagree with him. He took a long time to say no. He could have been a bit more to the point. I think he was wrong. I have to say to all of you in this House: If you want a high-quality arts

sector, if you want to have the arts fully shape our community and do it in a way that is memorable, that is profound, that strikes others in the world, you have to support the people who actually do the work, who actually do the creation. All we're asking for is that they not have to fight on the very simplest things.

The new representative from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is a musician. He had to fight to get severance after working for eight years as a musician in a restaurant in Oshawa riding. No artist should have to go through that. This legislation can at least set some ground rules so that artists can know that there is some base underneath their feet. The underpayment of artists in this society is not only scandalous, but it's also economically counterproductive. So I ask everyone in this House to think not only narrowly, but very broadly, and support this legislation. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That concludes the time for this particular ballot item. For those who are visiting us here in the gallery here today and those who are watching at home, Mr. Tabuns's item will be voted on in about 100 minutes' time.

MOTOR VEHICLE DEALERS
AMENDMENT ACT
(DISCLOSURE OF LEMONS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE COMMERCE
DES VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES
(DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS
CONCERNANT LES VÉHICULES
DE PIÈTRE QUALITÉ)

Mr. Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 164, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 164, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur le commerce des véhicules automobiles.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise before the House today. The previous bill was a little on the esoteric side; this is a much more practical bill that I think will bring some practical advancement to those people who use motor vehicles as their choice of transportation in their communities. It's An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Dealers Amendment Act, in second reading today.

Before I start, I'd like to thank my staff who assisted in the preparation of this. Jen Adams has joined us today, along with Steven Ball; Waqas Iqbal, my intern from the legislative intern program; and particularly, today is almost the last day for Tania Barile, who has been my executive assistant for three years and will be leaving me tomorrow and going to Guelph. I really wanted to thank my staff for the assistance that they've given me in this.

The basis of this bill is going to require motor vehicle dealers to disclose in writing to potential buyers whether a vehicle has been determined to be a lemon under the laws of another jurisdiction. Before I started to prepare this bill, I didn't realize that "lemon" was actually a

technical term that's enshrined in a lot of other legislation throughout states and provinces in Canada now. But currently, the existing situation in Ontario is that there's little protection available to a consumer who has purchased a car that, in fact, is being imported from a dealer in the United States. So the purpose of the bill we have before us today that I'm asking your support for is to ensure that Ontario's consumers are able to feel confident when they purchase a used vehicle in Ontario and know that they're making an informed decision and that the vehicle that they're purchasing has indeed not been declared a lemon under the laws of another jurisdiction.

Now we've got some changes that are coming into place January 1, 2010, and that's going to be some regulations and amendments to the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2002. There are going to be extensive disclosure requirements concerning a vehicle's history and the previous condition of that vehicle. Through the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, buyers, lessees and others will be permitted to cancel a contract to lease or to purchase a vehicle within 90 days if a dealer fails to comply with the disclosure requirements of the act.

But what is not in the act as it currently stands is that the act does not explicitly require the disclosure of whether a motor vehicle is indeed a lemon by the definition of another jurisdiction. What it does, for greater certainty for the members, is that the Motor Vehicle Dealers Amendment Act would amend the regulations to explicitly require the disclosure of whether a car or vehicle has been labelled a lemon by another jurisdiction. This amendment would allow Ontarians—our constituents, from all parties—to have the same equity, to get the same treatment, based on what was just passed in Manitoba in the spring of 2008. That piece of legislation was called the Business Practices Amendment Act (Disclosing Motor Vehicle Information). A lemon is defined as "a motor vehicle that was returned to the manufacturer under the laws of another jurisdiction because

"(a) it did not conform to the manufacturer's warranty, and

"(b) it had defects or conditions that substantially impaired its use, value or safety and that were not repaired within a reasonable time period or after a reasonable number of attempts...."

I think we can all go through our lives and through some of the vehicles we've had and perhaps have stories about some of the frustrations that we've experienced in the purchase of that vehicle and in our ability to get it fixed.

Interjection.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Mr. Leal is going to tell us about a special vehicle that has been part of his life or part of his history.

Manitoba was the first province in this country and is currently, unfortunately, the only province that has passed this type of legislation so far. But currently, every state in the union in the United States has a "lemon" law in place. We should be following their lead; in fact, we should be part of the leadership.

The United States has also had federal legislation in place since 1975. That piece of legislation is called the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act, and it governs the warranty on all consumer products. Full warranty requirements are set out in the act and include responsibilities in case of a defect, a malfunction or a failure to conform with the written warranty of the vehicle.

As provinces take the lead in Canada, it's not a federal responsibility to ensure consumer protection, but it's my hope that our federal government will also take action in this regard because it's Transport Canada, through the Registrar of Imported Vehicles, that makes a determination of what vehicles may or may not be imported into our country.

Manitoba is currently in the process of preparing a discussion paper in order to consult with various stakeholders that would be affected by the regulation to their act, and I look forward to reading that discussion paper when it is released.

1440

Manitoba's law actually came about as a result of a CBC News investigation that took place in November 2007. That investigation found that more than 130 vehicles that had officially been declared lemons under United States law were being sold in Manitoba, as if they had not been declared lemons, to consumers who had no reason to believe these cars had ever been declared lemons.

Through this bill, what we'd like to see is the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services receive the power to set requirements by regulation that would ensure we come up with a comprehensive plan, and that includes consultation with car dealers, consumer watchdogs and other interest groups on the final information that might be included in this amendment.

It's a proactive bill. We need to ensure that Ontario's consumers are making informed decisions before they buy any vehicle. It's particularly significant in today's difficult economic times, when for most people the purchase of a vehicle is the second-largest purchase they will make, after buying a home, of course.

A March 4, 2009, Canada.com article states that 2.7 million cars and trucks will come off lease in the United States this year, and they're expecting to see a flood on the North American used vehicle market; some 216,000 more vehicles than in 2008. The article goes on to state that the trend is more relevant in Canada, because hundreds of thousands of these used vehicles are bought by Canadian used car dealers and individuals and are trucked across the border every year. This bill is going to enhance the current consumer protection that is in place.

Many of you will be familiar with CAMVAP, the Canadian motor vehicle arbitration plan, which helps resolve disputes with automobile manufacturers and consumers but is not a valid avenue for vehicles that have been imported from the United States. For example, you would be ineligible for arbitration from CAMVAP if your vehicle had over 160,000 kilometres on it or if it was more than four model years old, and you wouldn't be

eligible for the buyback program at all if your vehicle was more than three years old and had over 60,000 kilometres on it. The bill is not stating that the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council and CAMVAP are ineffective, but just that in cases where cars are brought up from the United States, we need to ensure there are protections in place to further protect Ontario consumers.

The intent of the bill is certainly not at all to state that all North American vehicles are lemons. I know that not to be the case. I have a motor vehicle assembly plant in my riding, in Oakville. I drive a North American vehicle myself, and have had it for a number of years. We also have a hybrid vehicle in the family, and we're seriously considering the purchase of a new hybrid from Ford. It was encouraging today to see that Ford is considered a stock you should now consider buying. After all the bad news from the auto industry, economists and experts are suggesting that Ford may be a good stock to add to your portfolio.

The implementation date of the Motor Vehicle Dealers Amendment Act is scheduled for January 2010. That gives us time to look at this amendment, make sure it's done properly and make sure that consumers are being protected.

The act has received endorsement from Phil Edmonston. Of course, many of you will know Edmonston as the Canadian consumer advocate, writer and former politician. But I think he's best known for his series of annual Lemon-Aid car guides.

The bill has also received support from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. They say, "It has been said that information is power. In today's difficult economic times, access to relevant information is vital. By introducing this legislation, you're helping consumers to access information that will allow them to make better and more-informed decisions when purchasing a used car."

This issue is cause for concern because of the significant numbers of vehicles being imported from the United States into Ontario, where they are ultimately re-registered. According to the North American Automobile Trade Association, about a quarter of a million vehicles were imported into Canada from the United States in 2008. Further, almost all of these vehicles had prior registration in the United States, and approximately 33% to 35% of all vehicles imported into this country are actually imported into Ontario.

It's a proactive approach. Consumers will be informed. Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety estimates that manufacturers buy back more than 100,000 lemons a year and then resell most of them, often without disclosing their history. Currently some of these cars are finding their way into our province, and I want to do something about that.

A CBC News investigation detected a steady increase in the number of lemons imported into Canada when the dollar was approaching parity. Between May 1, 2006, and November 5, 2007, the study tracked 852 American lemons that were imported into this country.

In planning this bill, I've spoken to various automobile associations. There have been suggestions that, instead, we amend the regulations of the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act to include disclosure of a manufacturer's buyback instead of using the term "lemon." I suggest that it's not the terminology; it's not a game of semantics here that's important to me, as long as it achieves the same result.

Consumer protection is something we can advance here today by supporting this bill, assuming that what we will be doing is explicitly introducing consumer protection to our constituents where it currently doesn't exist. As I said, it's a very practical bill, but it's something that touches just about every life and every individual eventually in this province, as we all rely on personal motor vehicles as a part of our everyday life. So supporting it this afternoon is something you can do that's going to impact people positively.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: As I said earlier, it's sort of like being the Maytag man here today. I do have my other colleague here from Oxford, who's very capable. In fact, I'm going to share my time with him, I think. At this point in time I'm putting him on notice that this is a bill that I know he's genuinely interested in. But I think everyone in the House would be interested in supporting this bill. When you're looking at consumer protection today in the economy, in globalization—I may wander off topic a little bit, but I'll be generally on topic to the extent that we'd be supportive of the bill because of the consumer protection implications. But again, I want to make reference that these private members' bills are not that substantive—no reflection there on the member and his intent. I know that the member from Oakville has worked hard on this bill. Actually, he has been quite complimentary to me. He has copied a couple of my bills, which is a compliment, really, in a backhanded sort of way.

What the bill does—it's important to bring the viewer on side here and try to get on the same channel. It says: "The bill amends the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act to require motor vehicle dealers to disclose in writing whether a vehicle has been determined to be a lemon under the laws of another jurisdiction."

We have Manheim and other kinds of auto auctions and these kinds of things around the country. This has been a problem. In Ontario, when a vehicle has been in an accident, the insurance company and others are supposed to mark the vehicle as scrapped, okay? It's supposed to be on the record of that vehicle, under the VIN, the vehicle identification number. So there is a process when you go to buy a used vehicle where you're able to get the data, the vehicle history, and it's required if you buy a roadside product. The problem is that some of the dealers may not be quite as transparent. By making it law, you still have the requirement for people to abide by the law, and if you get people who are kind of rebuilding cars from scrap cars or yard scrap, it could be problematic.

But let's look at the bill here. I think it is a consumer protection—it says that "'lemon' means a motor vehicle that was returned to the manufacturer under the laws of another jurisdiction because,

"(a) it did not conform to the manufacturer's warranty, and

"(b) it had defects or conditions that substantially impaired its use, value or safety and that were not repaired within a reasonable time period or after a reasonable number of attempts;"

1450

Another section here, section 2 of the bill:

"Subsection 30(1) of the act is repealed and the following substituted:...

"(1) Motor vehicle dealers shall disclose in writing the following information to customers and to motor vehicle dealers and shall make the disclosure at such time as may be prescribed:

"1. Whether the vehicle has been determined to be a lemon under the law of another jurisdiction.

"2. Such other information as may be prescribed."

Fairly vague, really. But what I can say is that we all recall the name Ralph Nader, the great crusader who ran for President. He has run for a lot of things—mostly from the law, I guess. But here's the deal: His intent was fine and well intended. Ralph accused General Motors's Vega of being unsafe at any speed. I'm older, and a lot of this stuff I've heard about for years. Actually, they did a series of scientific, independent, third party research and found out it was no less safe than any other vehicle, and yet it had marred the reputation of General Motors. You could say that that was why they were demonstrating on the lawn here today. The company steadily had a trajectory from positive to negative. Unsafe at Any Speed was the book by Ralph Nader about the Vega. It turned out it wasn't even accurate.

So I challenge the member with the best of intentions—it's a feel-good kind of bill—to define the framework and process for testing. You're on very thin ice here because the Minister of Transportation, as we speak, perhaps in his office in secrecy right now, is probably—what they call low-speed vehicles is a big deal nowadays. In fact, you're going to be authorizing the electric vehicle that wasn't even authorized in Ontario. You know what I'm talking about: the electric vehicle. They denied it in Ontario, and it's for sale in other provinces.

What I'm saying is: good intention; no detail. It's like a sandwich with nothing in it. It's two pieces of bread and I'm assuming it's a sandwich. Innovation in automobiles today is going to have to be carefully watched by the government and qualified technical people, not politicians, to develop those vehicles of the future, some of which will be electric.

The Volt car is going to set the pace for the future. The Volt—we have all heard about it. You've seen pictures of it on television. I've actually seen it at the auto show in Detroit. You could drink the stuff coming out of the tailpipe—I wouldn't want to, because the tailpipe itself may be made of lead or tin or something like that—

the point being that it is not going to be using carbon fuel.

I digress a bit. When you get into these, there's a vehicle now being made in India—I forget the name of it. I think it could be called the Nano or something like that. Does anybody know the name of the Indian vehicle? The vehicle in India is going to sell for about \$2,000—

Mr. Michael Prue: Tata.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's Tata Motors. It was featured at the auto show, too. I didn't look at it. But they won't conform even now with all of the standards. In fact, there's no consistency in standards—consistency in standards of safety, air bags, CAFE, which is corporate vehicle fuel consumption, and stuff like that.

So when you talk about the lemon—the Edsel was a lemon in terms of the market. Does anybody remember the Edsel? It's a collector's item now.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. I wish I had one.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Prue said he had one. That was when he was mayor of East York, when he had a good job.

The point being, the Edsel—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Let's calm down here for a minute. It wasn't really a lemon. It was a lemon in the marketplace, but the vehicle had been extensively tested and determined to be leading-edge. It just turned out that the design looked like some sort of spaceship that had landed in a dump. It was terrible, really. Look, nothing against it. Edsel was one of the sons of Ford. Do you recall that? That's right. I'm not sure how Edsel the person turned out, but Edsel the car—that's a story for another time.

But in the very few minutes I have left, I'll start the next chapter of this book. The short title is the Motor Vehicle Dealers Amendment Act. A compliment to the member is that consumers should be aware that the province now has in place a vehicle history document. If you can't get that, that is a problem, and maybe you shouldn't be giving anybody any money.

Roadside sales are another issue. Sometimes it's a cash transaction, and you can register—you have to have a safety certificate. What does a safety certificate really mean? It means there is no perforation rust, and that's about it, really; maybe the brakes, the emissions control—there might be some emissions. That vehicle could have been written off, technically. You've got to be careful. It is a consumer protection thing now. The consumers' magazine, I think, is a good place to start protecting yourself.

Again, vehicles that come from other jurisdictions in this globalized world have other, and possibly lower, standards in the case of some countries, because of the state of their economy or the state of their manufacturing, but we know now what is happening. Thanks to the Premier—I'm not blaming him exclusively—all the trucks that were made in Oshawa are now being made in Mexico—seriously. The trucks that were made at the truck plant in Oshawa are being made in Mexico. Some

vehicles from North America—Buick, for instance, is going to be built in China. I can't say that they use the same employment standards—obviously, they pay a heck of a lot less—and that they will be compliant. I would hope they're compliant, but we're going to have to inspect them.

I think the member is saying that he's going to set up a whole bureaucracy to make sure that consumers are protected from these so-called lemons—he hasn't determined how we're going to define that. That's the intent. I support the intent of the bill, but it's like the sandwich reference. It could have used a little more time in the drafting room; we'll leave it at that. It's like making a movie: Maybe the best part is in the cutting room.

He does have some good ideas here. I think the intent is worthy. I'm going to sit down now and listen to what other persons might have to say on this bill. There is more to be said, and I'll defer to another time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I will speak to this bill, but I must say first that the member for Durham continues his tradition of an artistic and stream-of-consciousness approach to speaking in this Legislature. I'm sure it is appreciated not only by all my colleagues but by those who are watching on television now and in the middle of the night. When they're fighting to fall asleep and just need that extra little hit to put them over the edge, we here can help the people.

First of all, I want to commend the member for Oakville for bringing forward this private member's bill. There is no question that the requirement for disclosure is a sensible requirement. Speaker, as you are well aware—you have been in this chamber for many a year—occasionally private members' bills become law, and my hope is that this will become law, because I think that people need protection.

There are a lot of levels at which this matters. The member for Oakville is entirely correct: This is, in most instances, people's second-largest purchase—in fact, in some situations it is their largest purchase—so they have a huge amount riding on this. A purchase that goes sour and generates constant costs can be a nightmare—no doubt whatsoever.

The other factor, clearly, is that not only is it a question of financial problems, but if you are using a car—frankly, you don't have to use it regularly, but if you are using it at high speeds on one of the 400-series highways in this province and it fails, that is of great consequence. It can be a matter of life and death.

The member from Oakville noted that something like 2.6 million cars are going to be coming off lease in the United States in the next year or so, and, frankly, they're going to have to go somewhere. I would not be surprised if he's quite correct in predicting that a large number of those cars are going to come here. There are already pieces of legislation in place in a variety of American states that define and set out regulations regarding cars that are considered lemons, and I'll speak to that later.

1500

Phil Edmonston is endorsing this private member's bill. Phil Edmonston, with his Lemon-Aid series, put forward information that was extraordinarily popular. I have to say, you don't sell a lot of books about bad cars unless a lot of people have experience getting bad cars into their hands. They want information; they want to know what's going on. So that speaks to the base, the level of problems that people experience in this country.

The insurance bureau is calling for support for this bill. There's no question, if they are calling for it, that they've been dinged. They know that, in fact, a car breaking down on a highway is going to result in insurance claims. It also probably reflects the fact that the cars that we're talking about do not do as well in terms of claims, in terms of performance, and that they get hit.

My father was an auto mechanic, and as an auto mechanic he dealt with people who had bought cars that were not all that they expected them to be. I can't remember all of the stuff that he encountered, but sawdust in the transmission to muffle the noise of grinding was one of the things that he would talk to me about when he'd come home at the end of the day. There were a variety of other activities that went on to make sure that cars that shouldn't be sold were sold.

I would say that the pressure, in fact, to continue selling cars that are substandard is substantial, and when that pressure is substantial, then dealers will cut corners. They will do what it takes to move product off their lot, and they will do what it takes—I had a look there from one of the members. I have to say that substantial financial pressure will change the way that businesses and individuals will approach things. Companies in a recession that are getting a deal on a very cheap car from the United States, and perhaps cheap because it's not saleable there because it is in conflict with lemon laws in a variety of states, are going to look at bringing them here and trying to pass them off. We need at least the same level of protection as is put in place in other jurisdictions.

When we look at some things that have happened with cars over the decades, those who are in this chamber may remember the Pinto, a car that, when involved in an accident, had a very bad tendency of exploding into flame.

Mr. Michael Prue: The Vega, too.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Might have been the Vega as well, but I know the Pinto. I know the Pinto in part because my son is studying law, and one of the cases that they deal with in a very big way is the Pinto product liability, corporate liability. Apparently in its manufacture, a decision was made by the manufacturer to not correct the defect, because when they calculated the value of legal liability they would face, it was less than the cost of correcting the defect. Tremendous financial pressure to get a product out the door and bring in revenue can lead to decisions that do not protect the public. So this kind of legislation is the direction we have to go in.

We don't have to look at cars. We can look at what's happened with the financial services sector over the last

decade or two, when there was constant pressure to push back transparency, push back disclosure. My colleague from Beaches–East York, as the critic in this area, has often called for far more vigilant, far more in-depth policing of the securities industry, the financial industry overall, because, in fact, people do get taken for a ride. As you well know, in this case it wasn't a few people; it was millions of people, and companies, some of the largest in the world, that bought products, the value of which was indeterminable, the value of which they could not understand and the value of which led to catastrophic results for their corporations. Similarly, if people buy vehicles that are lemons, that were poorly manufactured, then those people will be stuck with a product that drains them financially and may well put their lives at risk on a high-speed highway. That's of consequence to us.

The question one might well ask is whether this bill does as much as we want it to do. As the bill is written, motor vehicle dealers will have to disclose to customers and other motor vehicle dealers whether the vehicle has been determined to be a lemon under the laws of another jurisdiction. It's a good thing to require. It's a good first step, but the NDP believes that we should go further than this. My hope is that this bill will pass, that it will go to committee, that it will be strengthened at committee and then be adopted.

In Pennsylvania, the lemon law requires all dealers and other classified sellers to disclose the "lemon history" of a used car and obtain a signature from the buyer or lessee before the sale or lease. The question was asked as to what is a lemon; what are the conditions that determine it? In Pennsylvania, they are classified as cars that have had three repair attempts or 30 calendar days out of service. Thirty calendar days out of service is a lot of time out of service. It's an indication that in fact a car has profound problems; it's not just a question of the odd missing bolt here and there but some substantial defect in its assembly.

There's no such thing as a perfect assembly process, a perfect work process. There are always going to be errors. When you make photocopies, if you make thousands, you will find defective copies. People, individuals, consumers in this society should not be in a situation where they are the ones who have to carry the burden of that bad copy, that bad assembly. They should have protection from that and they shouldn't be in a situation where they have to deal with it after the fact. They should be aware in advance of the quality of car they are getting.

There was an interesting piece on television, as I was flipping through about a month or so ago, about cars in Canada that were being sold with certificates showing that they'd never been involved in automobile accidents when in fact they had been involved in automobile accidents. Having a substantial accident is going to make a real difference to the structural integrity of a vehicle. In that case it wasn't just a question of lack of disclosure; it was falsification of disclosure. When we have these kinds of laws in place, it's going to be necessary not only to have them on the statute books but to have people out

there who actually enforce them, who go out, check, audit and make sure that what's represented to the public is in fact the reality.

In Pennsylvania, the lemon law requires all dealers and other classified sellers, as I said, to disclose the lemon history of a used car and to obtain a signature from the buyer or lessee before the sale or lease. If a manufacturer or dealer fails to comply with the disclosure requirement and/or the customer is not notified in the way specified, then the dealer or seller faces stiff civil penalties of \$2,000 per car and has to offer the purchaser or lessee their choice of a refund or a comparable vehicle without charge. As added protection, the Pennsylvania law mandates that manufacturers apply for a branded lemon title from government before the car can be resold, leased or transferred in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The title branding then remains throughout the life of a vehicle and can't be removed. The Pennsylvania law points the way toward the much more ambitious lemon protection scheme that this province needs.

I would say again to the member that I appreciate the fact that he has brought this forward to the floor of the Legislature. I hope it is passed, I hope it goes to committee, I hope there are hearings and I hope it's amended to make it at least as strong as the strongest legislation in the United States, because, as he said at the beginning, there is going to be a flood of cars out there that are going to have to go somewhere, and the jurisdiction that has the lowest level of protection is going to be the jurisdiction that gets most of them. So we have to protect ourselves by at least matching the protections that exist in American states that have already taken this on. I congratulate the member and thank him for coming forward.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It really is a delight for me to have the opportunity this afternoon to get a few thoughts on the record regarding Bill 164, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2002, brought forward by my very distinguished colleague the member from Oakville, Mr. Flynn.

I must say at the outset that I know Mr. Flynn has been very involved in the auto industry in his hometown of Oakville. He works very closely with the Ford company, which has had a very long history in Oakville. I think they moved from Windsor to Oakville in about 1955 to establish their extensive assembly operation and their parts network. Since coming here in 2003, Mr. Flynn is chair of the auto caucus, working closely with Bill Ford. I know Mr. Flynn consults with Mr. Ford from time to time, who I guess is the great-grandson of the founder of the Ford Motor Co., Henry Ford. I know he's very interested in the automotive industry, as we all are in the province of Ontario.

I know that the member from Durham was a senior executive for many years with General Motors and, if I have my history correct today, helped to establish the assembly plant in Sainte-Thérèse, Quebec. I think the

member from Durham recruited all those wonderful men and women to get that operation up and running. I know he has a strong, strong interest in that operation. He was born and raised in Peterborough. I know he left many years ago to find his future in Bowmanville and General Motors. He's a good friend of mine, and I always enjoy chatting with him.

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West also has a long history in the automotive industry in Ontario. I know that he had a very distinguished career with Fiat many, many years ago. He was a senior member of the Fiat team. Mr. Rinaldi retains a great interest in the auto sector.

I'd better get to the bill here; I digressed there for a moment. I want to tell a bit of a personal story. I was about four or five years old, so this would be about 1966 or 1967, and my father bought a used 1959 Chev Bel Air. Does anybody in this room remember the 1959 Chev Bel Air? It had the horizontal fins at the back; very distinctive. I guess my dad thought it was kind of a unique thing to buy, so he bought one in about 1965 or 1966. He bought it from a used car dealer at night—this is part of the story—and every time it rained, the back floors used to fill up with water. You could see that there were stains at the front of the car from water. Obviously, that was a good indicator that this vehicle, at some stage of its career, had been flipped over, the roof had been injured somehow and had been fixed to look presentable. So my father bought this Chevrolet. We had it for about three years, and every time it rained, it was like a swimming pool in the back. I always thought, "Holy smokes, if we're selling used cars in the province of Ontario, there must be some way to protect the consumer who was buying that kind of vehicle in order that it should be shipshape."

The other thing I remember: As a university student, I had the opportunity to work for a car dealer in Peterborough. I remember some of the older salesmen telling me these great stories. They would have an old clunker come in. They would buy two or three cans of Bardahl. Mr. Speaker, you may remember Bardahl; there were great commercials on TV about that. So you'd take this old junker, put three or four cans of Bardahl in it, and it used to make the valves quieten down enough that the car could be sold. Of course the other story is, you used to take the odometer, roll it back about 50,000 miles and tell that little old lady who was coming to the car dealership, "Well, we just freshened it up a bit, and this will be a great vehicle for you to purchase." The Bardahl has gone into it, the odometer has been rolled back, the sawdust has been put up the tailpipe, and it's ready to be put on the market to be sold as a fine used automobile.

Having told those stories, Mr. Flynn, who has introduced the bill today, has certainly highlighted for us the need to add extra consumer protection when it comes to buying a vehicle, which for many of us is the second-largest purchase that one makes during one's lifetime. With those few remarks, I'll conclude. I hope everybody in this House supports Mr. Flynn's bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to be able to speak on the lemon bill. When the member asked me if I would speak, he sent me some speaking notes—and we all get them when we're in the House from members who are putting bills forward. It was a subject that I didn't need speaking notes for, although when I read the speaking notes, there was some really factual information that more than substantiates why this bill is so important.

I remember that, between the ages of 16 to 20, I owned 25 cars at least. I remember when the Ministry of Transportation sent me a notice saying, "I think you should be taking out a dealership." The reason I am making this—because I remember the lemons, but at that time you were just buying cars because you loved them. There's nothing more important, back at that age, than owning a car, working on it, selling it and moving forward to the next car. Although I had a number of lemons, I have to say I wish I had some of them now: the 1957 Chevy, the 1958 Impala, the Corvette that I owned, the Thunderbird that I owned.

Most of them were good cars, but I had a number of lemons. I can remember quite clearly that back then there wasn't any kind of legislation, literally. My good colleague from Peterborough really enunciated the ways in which dealers back then used to fix up the cars to give the impression that they were A1. Mostly what caught your eye when you were buying these used cars was the outside of it, how it looked: It was shiny, it was waxed, it was well-conditioned, the seats looked great. No one really understood the importance of what made the car tick: the engine, the muffler system, the brakes—how important they were to making a car safe.

I think if I were back in the riding and I went around to people and said, "What do you think about a lemon bill for automobiles?" most people would have thought that we actually had such a thing. They'd be shocked to know that we don't have it here in Ontario. When I read the speaking notes and realized that across the US—let me know when my time is up; I only have a certain amount of time—there are; Manitoba; BC is looking at it. This is really a great opportunity.

I personally think, and I'm speaking for myself as the MPP for Niagara Falls, this bill is so significant that it's one the government should just take on and move forward. I don't think there would be any opposition to something like this, particularly for the benefit of the consumer.

So I'm pleased to have the opportunity to say that I totally support the bill. I know that my riding of Niagara Falls and my constituents would be in support of this bill. Thank you for allowing me to say a few words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I, too, am pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words in the few moments I have. First of all, I want to commend the member from Oakville for bringing this bill forward. It is something that is needed. I, too, thought that something like this

would be in place, and it does need to be in place because a lot of people do drive.

In my riding of Scarborough Southwest, we have a lot—a lot—of used car dealerships. The amazing thing about it is that you'll see a beautiful 2007, 2008 or 2009 vehicle sitting on one of these used car lots, and it will be going for \$4,000, \$5,000 or \$6,000. You say to yourself, "How can that be?" You know something is wrong with it, but you don't know what, and you're not going to find out by asking the vendor.

What the member has proposed here makes a lot of sense. I know that in the United States they do this; they've passed lemon laws. I would strongly suggest that we stay with the word "lemon," because "'lemon' means a motor vehicle that was returned to the manufacturer under the laws of another jurisdiction because ... it did not conform to the manufacturer's warranty, and ... it had defects or conditions that substantially impaired its use, value or safety and that were not repaired within a reasonable time period or after a reasonable number of attempts."

That's the key: This vehicle is a bad vehicle. It's not being repaired. Someone can build it—it can be any car company—and it could be passed on to somebody else and then sold. You don't know, as a purchaser, what you're getting until you leave the lot.

I was just speaking with my wife a bit earlier and she said that when she was 16 her very first car was a lemon, and there was no real recourse. You're 16 years old and you decide to go out and buy a vehicle. What do you do? Do you go to a lawyer? I don't think very many 16-year-olds are going to go to a lawyer. Even adults don't want to go to a lawyer and fight or argue over something of this nature. You hope that you can resolve it with the actual person who sold you the vehicle, but oftentimes they'll say, "No, sorry. You bought it as is," and that's the end of the story.

1520

This particular amendment to the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act provides that protection that we need. It says that there has to be disclosure, and disclosure basically means you've got to tell the truth. The vendor now has to tell the truth. He can't put a \$4,000 or a \$5,000 price on the vehicle and just say, "Do you know what? It's on sale because it's my last one of these models and I want to get rid of it." He has to tell the truth, he has to disclose it, and that's a big difference, because it's not there right now.

It makes tremendous sense. It's the sort of thing that makes working in this Legislature worthwhile. We're doing things and passing things that I think are necessary for the good and the benefit of all people. We're crossing party lines here and we're including everybody across Ontario who owns or would want to own a motor vehicle. In these days and times, with the climate the way that it is and with the economy the way that it is, the last thing you need is to end up with a vehicle that doesn't work. A vehicle that doesn't work has no other name but "lemon."

I'm glad that this has come forward, I support it, and I hope that it goes through committee quickly and gets approved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Flynn, you have up to two minutes for your reply.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise, and I do want to take this opportunity to thank all members of the House who have spoken in favour of the bill.

The member from Toronto—Danforth referred to it as a good first step; I think he's right.

I'd like to thank the members from Peterborough and Niagara Falls for their personal stories regarding some of their own purchases, and the member from Scarborough—Southwest for some of the commercial aspects that are entailed in a personal vehicle purchase.

The member for Durham—we were talking about cars. He got us off talking about sandwiches at one point, but that's just the way things roll around here sometimes, and deep in his heart I know he's a decent individual, and actually, I think he will support this at the end of the day.

I'd like to also thank Phil Edmonston from the Lemon-Aid series for his support on this, and of course the Insurance Bureau of Canada, which has also supported this. I'd also like to thank the industry professionals in the other organizations that I've spoken to. I received good feedback, I think in a positive vein, in a constructive way, in the planning of this bill, which my staff worked very hard on.

I just want to reiterate that the purpose of the bill is to ensure that our consumers in all ridings feel confident when they purchase a used vehicle in Ontario and they know they are making an informed decision; the vehicle has not been determined to be a lemon under the laws of any other jurisdiction. Through regulations of the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act coming into effect on January 1, 2010, dealers now will be subject to extensive disclosure requirements concerning that vehicle's history and condition, but what you're doing today by supporting this bill is you're saying to the consumers of Ontario that if that vehicle has been determined to be a lemon in another jurisdiction, under the laws of the province of Ontario that dealer is required to tell you about that. If not, he or she would be breaking the law. That can't help but be a good thing and a positive thing for our consumers. I'd ask for your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for that ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Flynn's ballot item in about 50 minutes.

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC MATTERS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Mr. Craitor moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public / *Projet de loi 159, Loi exigeant que les réunions des commissions et conseils provinciaux et municipaux et d'autres organismes publics soient ouvertes au public.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Craitor, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Kim Craitor: There's a saying that I've always believed in since I've been in politics, which has been about 15 years, and that is that democracy dies in darkness. It's something that I've lived by all my political life.

I believe that there needs to be much more openness and transparency in the affairs of public bodies, boards and commissions that represent the province of Ontario and represent the taxpayers of Ontario. I also believe that there are insufficient guidelines governing the opening of meetings of these different boards and agencies to the public, to the media, when it comes to doing business. I also believe that there's far too much public money that is being spent that is not open to public scrutiny and that the current rules governing the openness of public meetings have to be improved. So I want to just quickly talk about what I believe in terms of transparency.

Transparency is much more than accountability. It requires decision-making by any of these bodies to be transparent right from the beginning, while accountability is a process of verifying the quality of decisions or actions only after decisions have been made. Accountability generally implements some sort of punishment mechanism against individuals or institutions that are not taking appropriate actions—again, only after these decisions have taken place. I say, what good is that? We all know from experience that organizations are loath to admit that they make mistakes, and when they do come into the public view, they're embarrassed. Many of these organizations close their doors even more to the public and become more secretive and oftentimes manipulate the facts. It fosters a culture where, like mushrooms, power and privilege grow in the dark. I believe real transparency encourages corrections and improvements to decisions to be made long before poor-quality decisions have to be enacted.

What I am proposing may seem a bit radical, but whoever heard of doing the right thing for the right reason? I am asking my colleagues in the House to know that it's easier to get to a goal of more transparency, not less transparency, when it comes to making decisions.

That's why I'm proud of a couple of things that our government has already done in the name of transparency. They introduced Bill 2, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, which required government books to be audited six months before any election so that the public could really know the state of the provincial finances. As well, the government went on to proclaim another piece of legislation to enhance transparency under the new Municipal Act.

I know that I was first elected as an MPP in my riding because there were a number of concerns about what was happening with local agencies, government agencies, in my community. One was the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and the special arrangement they made to choose an American company to have control of oper-

ating both our casinos. The information about how they were chosen was never given out to the public. I know that when I was first elected, everyone was coming in and asking me, "How was this deal done? Who made the decision? Can you get us information?" Lo and behold, what I found out was that I had no access to that information as MPP. I was told that was confidential, and I could not even access it under freedom of information.

As well, I had people constantly coming in about the Niagara Parks Commission when I first was elected. Much to my surprise, I found that as an MPP I had no right to even attend their board meetings. I couldn't go in and talk to them about concerns I was hearing from the public. They were asking me legitimate questions.

As well I was having people constantly coming in and talking about issues regarding health care in Niagara. Lo and behold, I found that as an MPP I didn't have the right to go in to ask questions about scenarios, cases and problems people felt they were having with their personal health care in my riding.

So, as a new MPP, when I did try to get that information, it wasn't available because these agencies were not open to the public or even, in some cases, to an MPP. Operational transparency was denied, as I said, to an elected official. The results were pretty severe, because when I went back to the public and tried to explain to them that I couldn't get the information, the public became upset with me as their MPP. The press was wary when I couldn't respond to the questions they were asking me. There was a distrust in the labour force of some of these agencies who were employed by these boards. A lot of money and time was spent, with no results. How do we support institutions that are not transparent and hide behind the veil of not being open to the public? I'll tell you, it's very difficult. It's hard to tell the people who elected you that you are not able to get them the information they are entitled to.

1530

I am also proud of the fact that in my riding, the Niagara Falls newspaper, the Niagara Falls Review, under the banner of the headline "No Good Reason to Keep Boards' Business Private," wrote in support the first time I introduced this bill in the first session I was elected. They went on to say:

"Many of these public agencies"—that exist in Ontario—"are made up of elected representatives and government appointees.... most of these agencies are spending public money. In many cases, government appoints the boards of governors.

"It makes sense that their meetings should be open to the public they serve and through which they are funded."

I'm one of those who believe in sunshine. I think democracy is well served when everybody has the same facts. Open up the doors in the boardrooms of publicly supported companies and institutions and we'll have better governance, better decisions and, more importantly, better use of taxpayers' money.

I believe that a knowledgeable public is an engaged public and, when engaged, the public becomes involved.

They vote with knowledge and purpose. I often wonder: Is that a reflection of why voter turnout sometimes is getting lower with every election? The more they're involved in the agencies and have a chance to comment, the higher the participation. The main purpose behind a transparency bill is to guard against complacency and arrogance that can infect any public organization at any level.

How am I proposing this in my bill? I am proposing it in a number of ways. I'm proposing that every meeting of every public agency has to be advertised. I'm proposing that the meetings have to be open to the press, to the public, and they have a right to attend. I'm proposing that these agencies cannot introduce new business at the last second when they have their meetings.

The legislation is all about trust between the public and these institutions. I'm happy to say that my legislation does even more than that. It is more inclusive and will cover many other agencies that are not covered under existing legislation, such as public utilities, universities, colleges, CCACs, hospital boards and various parks commissions such as mine in Niagara Falls.

My proposed legislation also gives tools to the Information and Privacy Commissioner to investigate complaints. It increases fines to a minimum of \$2,500 and a maximum of \$10,000 for anyone who obstructs, withholds or misleads the commissioner in his duties to apply to both the board members and executive officers of an organization personally. I want to stress that this penalty is for misleading the investigator and not the violation of the bill. The legislation also gives other binding remedies for the violation of the principle of the bill.

There are probably over 400 various government and municipal organizations in Ontario that are spending 80% of provincial funding and are completely immune to scrutiny.

To my way of thinking, in this information age we have, with technology, it is a lot easier to be much more transparent. One of the easiest ways is to make sure that the public are notified of meetings. That can be done through the Internet, where the public can then look and see what's going to be discussed—much like city council meetings, where I spent 10 years. The press can see what's being discussed and then make a decision if they want to attend.

Another thing is to make background information on pending decisions more readily available and cause decisions to be made instantaneously to the community, out to the public, so they are aware of what's being decided by these different boards and agencies.

Of course, I understand that some of the meetings can be held legally behind closed doors. They can involve personnel matters, lawsuits or land matters. But the privilege has been abused far too often, and that's why the law needs to be changed. Can you imagine if this Legislature closed its doors for one day, kicked out all the spectators and kicked out all the journalists? Can you imagine if the House of Commons met in secret? People wouldn't stand for it. They wouldn't stand for it at any

other level, and yet it does happen out there with some of our agencies and boards.

Transparency, I believe, has to be done right. Oversight of a government rests on four fundamental principles—independence, impartiality, confidentiality and a credible investigative process—and my bill will accomplish that.

It now has a section to ensure, as I said, notice of meetings. It has a section to ensure that the public, if they believe that meetings have not been held properly, can file a complaint to the privacy commissioner and have an investigation done.

As well, the privacy commissioner has a lot more tools and power available to him to access these agencies. The bill authorizes the commissioner to make certain orders for reviews, including orders that can in fact void board decisions made at these meetings if they're deemed not to be held in a proper manner.

In essence, I think this is a great opportunity for the government and the members to show how much they believe in transparency and openness, not just here in the House but, more importantly, by all the various agencies that make some major decisions and spend some major money on behalf of taxpayers.

I'm simply going to say to the House: I'm hoping to get support from all the members in the House in the name of transparency and to support the bill that I'm putting forward. This will be the second time that I have brought this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to support the concept of open meetings. I'm pleased that the member from Niagara Falls recognized the importance of open meetings and transparency, because, as he mentioned that he hoped that all the members here support it, it seems quite obvious that the government doesn't support it. The Premier didn't even think that he needed to consult with his caucus when he was negotiating the HST with the federal government. He did the negotiations, he signed the deal and then he told his caucus this was what they were going to do.

The government has had plenty of opportunity. They've had three opportunities—once before, this member from Niagara Falls introduced this piece of legislation, and before that, the member from Sarnia-Lambton introduced this legislation. Mr. Speaker, you will know that in this process of private members' bills, once you get it through second reading debate and everyone supports it, or if the majority of the House supports it, it goes to committee. But before it can come back for third reading, the government has to call it back, and so far, the government has not seen fit to call any one of the previous two. I'm really worried that this time they will not call this one back either.

In fact, the McGuinty government has actually reduced the number of open meetings. I think the member, in his remarks, mentioned Bill 130. Mr. Speaker, you will remember that Bill 130 was the revisions of the Muni-

cipal Act. The present government forced that through against the objections of the opposition, and it actually reduced the amount of open meetings. Their amendment to the Municipal Act gave municipalities the ability to hold more closed meetings.

There were many problems with Bill 130. There were so many problems that the Ombudsman, who had been given the opportunity to speak to the bill at one point, used up his time and then asked the Chair to be able to return because he had much more that he wanted to put on the record that he thought were grave concerns with the bill. But the Chair of the committee decided that we had heard enough from the Ombudsman and he was not allowed to come back, so he then sent the remaining remarks that he had in a letter to the committee, and I want to quote from that presentation. I won't read the whole presentation because we don't have enough time for that, but I want to read a couple of paragraphs. These are the words of the provincial Ombudsman.

"There is little room for closed-door politics in a mature democracy. We in mature democracies speak about transparency and openness with reverence because democracy cannot be healthy without transparency and openness. The reason is simple. Malicious or self-serving or just plain bad decisions, the bacteria of government, can flourish in the dark but in a democracy cannot survive the sanitizing light of public scrutiny. It is no surprise that those that exercise power behind closed doors invite suspicion. Closed doors breed distrust. And they should.

1540

"That is why I applaud the theory behind the open-meeting provisions of the Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006," which is Bill 130, and I think similar things could be said for this bill that's before us today. "It is also why I cannot applaud the specifics of the bill. It is badly flawed. Its shame is that it is in fact enabling legislation—it enables closed government while appearing without critical examination to champion openness. I want to bring that critical examination. Critical examination shows that this bill is not an effective solution to closed government. It needs to be fixed."

That's why I support this bill, because the individual presenting this bill from Niagara Falls is, in fact, trying to fix what the Ombudsman was talking about when it relates to open meetings. In spite of the objections of the Ombudsman, though—and that's the end of the quote from the Ombudsman—despite the concerns of the opposition, despite concerns of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, the McGuinty government put the legislation through and allowed more closed meetings for municipalities.

In fact, and I want to put this on the record, during the clause-by-clause of Bill 130, the parliamentary assistant for municipal affairs, who is now Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, said, "We don't believe it will be in any way abused. We think it's an appropriate way, if a municipality chooses—they don't have to, but if a municipality thinks that in this particular issue they think it's

appropriate for educational and training purposes that it would be more effective go into an in camera meeting, to engage in that, they have that option, plain and simple.” It seems ironic that a member of that caucus is pushing for more open meetings now when not one of them voted against Bill 130, which allowed more closed meetings.

As I said, I support the concept of open meetings. I think that transparency and accountability are too often lacking in government, and I support efforts to increase them. However, there are a few problems with how this bill introduced by the member for Niagara Falls accomplishes the goal of transparency.

One of the challenges in the bill is, it gives the Information and Privacy Commissioner the right to enter and inspect a premises without a warrant or court order. I think it is always dangerous to grant that right. The process of applying for a court order or warrant is to ensure that the rights of the citizens are protected. We’ve seen this clause in a number of pieces of legislation from this government, and every time we do, on this side of the Legislature, we’ve pointed out that it is wrong. Unless there is an emergency situation where a person is in physical danger, there should be no excuse for proceeding without getting a warrant.

As an example, a volunteer who is serving on a public board and takes a document back to their office could actually have their workplace searched without a warrant. No one would be protecting their rights to privacy. Ironically, no one would be ensuring that the actions of the Information and Privacy Commissioner were transparent.

Section 14: I’m also concerned about the clause that allows the commissioner to decide not to proceed with a complaint because too much time has lapsed, even if it is within the time limits he himself has prescribed. This is unfair to the citizens and can lead to confusion. I understand that complaints must be filed within a reasonable time, but a consistent and clear cut-off must be established.

The bill itself, in schedule 1, has a long list of different boards and commissions that this applies to. In the bill, it also points out that the minister could add to that list if the need occurs. One of the items, number 7 on that list, is the council of a municipality. The reason I mention that is because there is also a section of the bill that says that the provisions of this bill override any other legislation unless the other legislation is stricter. So unless the other legislation prohibits in camera meetings totally, then this would apply to all, including the Municipal Act. The bill also includes a section that says that in the event of a conflict, this bill prevails over all others. That means that if this bill passes, municipal council meetings will be dictated by this act instead of the Municipal Act.

Going back to my earlier comments, if this bill passes here today, it requires the House leader from the government side to call it forward for third reading. I mentioned the comments from the Ombudsman and the parliamentary assistant. I find it inconceivable that the government would at any point call this bill back for

third reading, which would make the Municipal Act even stricter than it was prior to the government making closed meetings more prevalent in the act.

Section 9 of the bill—and I think this is constructive criticism—deals with keeping minutes of the meetings. In the Municipal Act, it says the that actions of council shall be taken “without note or comment.” Under this bill, it defines what the minutes should include and it says, “contain sufficient detail to adequately inform the public of the main subject matters considered, any deliberations engaged in and any decisions made.” The only part of that which is allowed in the Municipal Act today is the part that says “and any decisions made.” They’re not allowed to put in their minutes the discussion that took place because that would be note or comment. So again, we have the confusion with this and the other act.

While I support the goal of this bill—and the thing I really agree with in the bill is section 28: “The short title of this act is the Transparency in Public Matters Act, 2009.” I couldn’t support that any more strongly. I think there is a need for this transparency but I don’t believe that this bill will ever see the light of day for third reading. I think we should all be working harder to get the government to understand the need for this type of legislation and get it introduced.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my colleague from Oxford, who is almost my seatmate—across a little, tiny barrier here. Although I share many of the sentiments he has expressed here today, I will be supporting the bill. I will be supporting the bill, notwithstanding I understand the difficulties he has enunciated, and very carefully, of how this bill will have to wend its way through, and a governing party that has not seen fit to pass similar legislation in the past will probably, in all likelihood, not allow this to come forward for third reading.

I don’t take anything away from the proponent of the bill, the member from Niagara Falls. He has for a long time believed in openness in government. I have heard him in this Legislature, I have heard him outside of this Legislature and I’ve had the good fortune of knowing him for many years within the union movement, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, where both of us were people who participated in that good union. He was a proponent, even within those union days, of having matters opened up.

I remember being a public employee. I remember how, at one point, the legislation was passed in Canada that said there was a freedom of information act. I worked in the immigration department. We kept enormous files on many, many hundreds of thousands of people. I remember that when the act came into force, some of the public employees were a little reticent because of what they had written in the files, what might be contained within them and the freedom of access to those. There was some considerable angst. I remember being taken

into training sessions and people, quite rightly, said, "You cannot be putting things in these files that you do not want to be seen in the future. If it is correct and factual, then put it in. If it is a comment on the nastiness of the person with whom you were dealing, leave it out." We learned very early that those kinds of things had to be done because the public has an unqualified right to know what is contained within those files that pertain to them.

Later on, when I became a councillor and then later the mayor of the borough of East York, this was driven home many, many times to us, about the public's right to know. There were many times that my colleagues on council wanted to go into private session. There were many times that they thought, "This is a little bit contentious. We want to have some advice from the lawyer," but I am proud to say that over the length of time that I was on council, the length of time that I was a councillor and later the mayor, the number of times we went into private session were few and far between. They always involved, without exception, either a personnel matter or some advice from the lawyer on land transactions. We were strong in our resolve to make sure that we did not go into private session because in my view, that is not what should ever happen.

1550

One of the really black marks of my time on municipal council took place not in East York but later, following amalgamation, at the city of Toronto. I had the privilege and responsibility of representing the people of East York at what was then the new megacity of Toronto. I remember one particular night when we went into private session, much to the consternation of many of the members of the council. We went into private session to discuss the purchase of computers from MFP. I remember that night. I remember not wanting to go into closed session. I remember the arguments that were being made by some proponents, particularly Mr. Jakobek, who was the budget chief. I remember that there was some support from the lawyers that some of this was contentious because it involved the amount of money that we were going to have to pay MFP and some of the conditions that council may want to put on the contract. I remember, and I still remember to this day, going into that private session very late at night. I think it was around 10 or 10:30 when we actually went into private session. People were tired, people were upset and people wanted to go home. Quite frankly, that whole MFP decision took only about 20 minutes to be made. I clearly remember the proponents standing up and saying, "This is a good deal. The commissioner supports it. The lawyers support it. I support it. Let's all go home." In fact, in a nutshell—and you can check the records; I've said this to the public inquiry as well—that's precisely what happened.

It taught me a very valuable lesson. It taught me a valuable lesson that has taken place over years, although when we came out of private session I want everyone to know that I voted no. I thought something stank; I still think something stank. It was pretty bad. The fact of the matter is that everybody who was in the room, all of the

public who were there, were barred. No one got to see what we were discussing. The newspapers that attended the megacity councils faithfully did not have an opportunity to see or hear. All that happened is, we went back into public session for about one minute, the vote was taken, the vote was passed and we ended up with MFP computers.

I've had the opportunity of being on many boards and commissions over my life—boards and commissions that are listed here in the schedule at the back. I have to say that I believe that all of these should have full public scrutiny. I cannot in my imagination understand how any of the boards or commissions listed here should not have an opportunity for people, ordinary members of the public, to come forward to see how tax dollars are being spent. Whether it is direct tax dollars or indirect tax dollars, it is all one and the same. I believe that the newspapers ought to have an opportunity, and reporters and people who are interested ought to be able to go there.

I know Mr. Craiton did not take an opportunity to read the full list, but I think it's important that we listen to what this list is because it's quite exhaustive and extensive. It includes the Ontario College of Social Workers, the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., which I think would be a favourite of my colleague from Welland. It includes the Ontario Municipal Board, and I believe that every single one of their hearings should be open to the public. Then it goes on to talk about designated public bodies, including universities, hospitals, colleges, boards of health, colleges of health professionals, commissions under the Municipal Act, a council of a municipality, a school board, a services board, a police services board, a library board, a parks commission, local health integration networks, electrical boards and community care access boards. I'm sure that the list is not exhaustive, but that's what is on the back.

All of these are boards or commissions where people should have the right to know what is being said. None of them ought to be closed to the public. I don't care really what the issue is, save and except, and I think two still stand the test: If it is a personnel matter where somebody is being hired or fired, where people are being named, a grievance procedure, that is one thing. The other one is strict advice from the lawyer on the purchase of land. I think that is quite another.

Other than that, I don't really see the purpose of excluding the public. I know that when I have gone to some boards or committees over time, it is difficult to gain access. It's difficult to gain access to a number of things. But I think that everything we do should bear that scrutiny.

I will digress a little. I know it's not a board or committee, but I remember taking particular umbrage at what can be described as a ministerial committee of this House, trying to go in and trying to find out about the new poverty bill. I remember driving all the way to Peterborough to get into that, to hear what was being said, and being denied as a member of this House. It wasn't just

me who was denied, it was members of the public, and I think the public has a right to know what was being discussed. I would hope that this bill would not allow such an occurrence, because it didn't happen just once; it happened when I went into Durham region, it happened in Toronto and it happened literally every time I showed up. In Ottawa I was denied entry too, and so were other members of the public.

If it is a good process, what is to stop the members of the public from watching it? They don't have to be participants; they don't even have to be allowed to speak. They don't have to be able to make deputations, but they should be allowed to watch it. I believe that every member of this House should have that opportunity, just as I believe every duly elected person in a municipality or school board should have that opportunity. Every member of the public, if they are so inclined and want to attend, should be able to have that opportunity.

I could not help but notice in reading the bill that it is rather complex. I have to perhaps give some advice to my good colleague the member from Niagara that on such a complex bill as this, it might have helped some of the members of the Legislature to receive a few notes or something to the effect. None were forthcoming, at least none that I could find, to try to describe what the intent was or where the actual changes to the bill were being envisaged, but that's for another time.

The one thing that did seem to bother me a little, and I still have some difficulty with this, is telephone meetings. It allows for telephone meetings and for people to participate in telephone meetings, but I don't know how they gain access. In order to gain access to a telephone meeting—and we have all had them; we have all had these conference calls—you have to have a time, you have to have a number that you phone, you have to have a code that is given out only to the participants, and then you get on board. But even when you get on board, if the conference is a large one, it is difficult to know who is speaking or who is participating. It is absolutely impossible, even with a trained ear, even when you know most of the players, to determine who is speaking and who is contributing. I have some very real difficulties. I don't know how you would ever enforce this. I'm not sure we should even allow such meetings where decisions are being made to exist in public bodies. But say that as I may, I thought I should bring that up. If it does go to committee, I think some considerable thought is going to have to be given to this.

In the end, though, should we support the bill? Yes. Should we strive, as elected people, to make sure that the public is always aware? Yes. Should we be trying to do so within the body of this Legislature whenever possible? Yes, we should be doing that, again, as well. And just as I was not allowed into those couple of meetings around the poverty bill, I think the same thing holds true of other opportunities for the public to be present, everything right down to the budget bill. We should be making them open and accessible to everyone.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): I recognize the member for Brampton–Springdale.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 159, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public. But before I begin speaking, I would like to use this opportunity to thank Richard Carnifax. He is one of two interns who have been in the Legislature for the last two months from Akron, Ohio; they're from the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics. Richard was helpful in preparing some comments for me today, so I wanted to formally say thank you. I'm going to lose him in about a week, and I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to have him in my office.

When I first joined this Legislature, back in 2003, I met a member who impressed me with her sincerity and hard work. It was the member from Sarnia–Lambton, Liberal MPP Caroline Di Cocco, who originally brought forward a very similar private member's bill. I remember how thoughtful she was in the way she spoke about the importance of transparency and committees, making sure that the public know what goes on behind closed doors.

1600

She introduced a bill when the Liberals were in opposition. She tried again while in government back in 2004, with Bill 123. That attempt died when she became a cabinet minister.

I remember when she spoke in the Legislature, and I want to quote a few things she said about her bill at the time.

"This bill is about transparency in public matters. Currently in Ontario, there are some guidelines in various acts governing open meetings for public bodies, but there are no penalties imposed or mechanisms for complaint when those guidelines are not complied with. Again, many states in the US, including Michigan, have open meetings acts, with penalties placed on those who serve in public bodies who are found to have broken the rules."

She believed, as I do, that the public has a right to know, and that was the premise of her bill. "Public bodies, unlike private companies, are really doing public business. It is important, in the whole system of decision-making we have, that that is done so that the public understands how that body has arrived at that decision. How do you do that?" By having your meetings in public.

The member from Niagara Falls tried to bring forward his bill back in the first term: Bill 142, as it was called at that time, Transparency in Public Matters. It's his second attempt today to get the private member's bill through the provincial Legislature and passed into law, and it's the fourth attempt in the last decade.

His private member's bill would require a list of public bodies, including municipal councils, hospital boards and provincial agencies, to meet in public, to notify the public of their meetings and to make the minutes available to the public.

When the member from Beaches–East York spoke about his municipal experience, I listened intently, because in my experience on municipal council, when I was elected back in 1991 to Brampton city council, we weren't so diligent about what happened behind closed

doors. Really, it should only be for three things. It should be for property acquisition, personnel issues and litigation.

But I found, at the beginning of my municipal career, that it wasn't always that cut and dried. I know that things are better now, but I think that many boards don't understand their fiduciary responsibility and the requirement that they have to make sure that these pieces of legislation and/or decisions are made in a public setting. It's very important that they do. The public may not always like the decisions, but the public has an opportunity with this legislation to see what boards do, to know what they're doing, to attend the meetings and to scrutinize those decisions.

I really support the member from Niagara Falls in his attempt to pass this bill. I regret that it's even necessary to bring forward a piece of legislation in order to bring more openness and more accountability to meetings of municipal boards and commissions.

We all find here that we understand how open our debate process is, but on municipal councils and many boards, those decisions aren't made public, the minutes aren't made public and people don't know when the meetings occur. They have public dollars at their discretion that they must make that decision about.

In closing, I support the member for Niagara Falls. I think that each one of us tries to leave our mark and imprint in this House, to make the province a better place. I believe that this bill would achieve that goal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, I just want to acknowledge the member from Niagara Falls. I would say at the outset that I certainly agree with some of the sentiment he expressed.

My colleague the member from Oxford, in his experience, gave some very good advice and pretty well covered some of the issues or concerns in the technical drafting of the bill—I think he draws a very good point—as well as the oversight by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ms. Cavoukian. The strong oversight and investigative powers that she has are something that we'd be a little bit reticent to support: "Inspection powers," "Time of entry," "Entry to dwellings," "Search warrants"—without a warrant. Those kinds of things are a little bit heavy-handed, but the intent is laudable, and it's a good goal.

You did mention in your remarks from your own experience—we have all had those kinds of experiences if you've served in municipal government. My friend from Oxford did mention that the Municipal Act does cover the requirement to have open meetings except for personnel and property matters, and I suspect there's also room for matters that are before the courts or other considerations with their lawyer that they might be going through.

But as far as transparency and openness, the theme of the bill, I'm all in support of it—totally. As a matter of fact, he mentioned the OLG down in Niagara Falls and the problems there—and the Niagara Parks Commission.

I think that on some of the stuff with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the lottery scandals we've had, slushgate etc., the Premier should have invoked some of this stuff earlier and investigated it, but he didn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 159. I certainly want to start by thanking the member from Niagara Falls. I've noticed that any time a private member's bill comes forward from this gentleman, it's always well thought out and there's always a greater public good attached to it. In this case, I'd say that the type of conduct that typifies his conduct in this House can be seen through this bill.

Like the member, I spent some time on council—18 years in the region of Halton and at the town of Oakville—so I'm quite aware of some of the times where it's appropriate to go in camera to deal with things like property acquisitions, personnel issues and legal issues. There is an appropriate time for public bodies to deal with their concerns in private for good business reasons, but most of the time that business is best dealt with in public, and it just enhances the confidence that people have in the governmental system when that transparency is enhanced.

That certainly is the intent, as I understand it, of Bill 159: to take the transparency that we already have at all levels of government and to enhance that transparency, to expand it into other areas and to bring a degree of accountability.

I know that when I talk to people in my own riding of Oakville, quite often—and it doesn't matter which party you're talking about, and I don't think it matters what level of government—what people want to see is an increased level of accountability from that level of government. Sometimes that can get into financial areas. They want to know how the books are kept. They want to know how expenditure decisions are being made. They want to know if the organization is taking on debt, and if that debt is manageable. But also, I think, from an ethical point of view, you want deliberations that are supposed to be made in the public good to be done in the public realm. It just makes sense.

That's what this bill is asking: that those public bodies that are currently funded by taxpayers' dollars also conduct their business within view of the public, and that the public are not only invited to the deliberations, to the proceedings, but are also made to feel that they're a welcome and an integral part of the decision-making process.

We take a lot for granted, I think, here in this country and in this province, and we assume that other people around the world govern themselves in the same manner that we do. That simply is not the truth. You can look at examples around the world where you've got systems of government that don't come close to matching the democratic rights that we take for granted in this province, and you've got to protect them. It's something that we have to instill in our children, that people have laid down their

lives for some of the rights that we take for granted on a daily basis, and when the opportunity arises to make that system even better, as the member from Niagara Falls is doing today, we should all be supporting that in this House.

The council experience that I had taught me that the local level of government is the closest to the people. It may not be the large-scale issues that are dealt with, although some fairly high-expenditure issues are dealt with around the council table, but it's a place where people feel closest to the people that they represent. It's also where the boards, the agencies, and some of the agencies and boards that we perhaps appoint people to as a provincial government—it's where they touch the people as well.

The council experience has taught me that when you open up processes and make them more transparent, rather than feel threatened, the people on those boards and agencies should actually feel that they are doing a better job and the public is far better served. Often, the public finds that they are really impressed with what is going on behind the doors of some of these agencies that typically they wouldn't have access to. So the increased access that this bill would grant the public to some of the decision-making bodies in the province certainly isn't something that I think anybody should feel threatened about.

1610

As I said right from the start, there is an appropriate time for public agencies that are making the best business decisions they can for the public good and on the public's behalf to go in camera, and that's when they're dealing with legal issues, property acquisitions and personnel issues. But I think it's important to note and to ensure that that process isn't abused. When a publicly appointed body that's expending hard-earned taxpayers' dollars is meeting to make decisions that are supposedly for the public good—and I think the vast majority of those decisions are made for the public good and for the right reasons—I think it's only reasonable to expect that those decisions be made in a transparent manner, as envisioned under Bill 159.

We all bring certain aspects of our own previous experience to this House. I know that those people who have been involved in business in the past, those people who have been involved in sports, some people who have been involved in local politics—I think those of us who come here with a municipal background bring a certain sensitivity to this issue. In the 18 years that I was on council, I saw the council process open up from one that I thought, when I first arrived on the council scene in my 20s, was a bit of an old boys' club, to be honest with you, and I saw that actually emerge into—it wasn't unusual for Oakville council to get 500, 600, 700 people to show up for council meetings on certain issues. That's a sign of a good and healthy community that has the best interests of its people at heart and isn't afraid to go out and present those issues to the public it purports to represent.

It certainly has been a good thing in the town of Oakville and the region of Halton. I don't think that I

would have any complaint at all about the way that those two levels of government conduct themselves. I think they do it in a proper manner, and by approving this bill today, what we would be doing is extending that same sentiment to other organizations that make decisions on our behalf, on behalf of our families and in the best interests of our communities.

The exceptions to the rules will still stand. That makes for good business practice. I think anybody with a corporate background would understand that there are certain times to make those decisions. Certain decisions have to be made. Sometimes they're tough. But where possible and where judged by the privacy commissioner to be appropriate, they should always be made in the public realm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Craitor, you have up to two minutes for your reply.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I just want to first thank all the members who spoke in support of the bill. The member from Oxford had some very constructive suggestions on how to improve the bill. Thanks to the member from Durham for his kind words. All three members from Brampton–Springdale, Oakville and Beaches–East York bring with them a municipal background, as I do, and I think that influences the way we feel about transparency.

I'm going to close by just saying a couple of short things.

For me, every day, coming to this House is a special day. I always consider the fact that there aren't many people in Ontario who have the privilege of being a provincial member of Parliament. I think all of us here, myself included, are thankful every day that we have that opportunity. Today is probably one of those even more special days, when you have a bill that you personally believe in, a transparency bill, a bill that you've always believed in for your whole political career, and you have the opportunity under private members' bills to put forth something that you want to see, if all three parties would support it and if the government would allow you to move it on.

I've introduced it for the second time. I'm going to keep introducing it. But I'm feeling comfortable that this time we can consider making some changes, move the bill forward, go to committee and then bring it back into the House.

I want to say to the people in my riding who have supported me with this bill—the local media has supported me, the number of people who come into my office, the letters that I've received in support of this. I will also share with the House that the last time I introduced it, I had a lot of letters in opposition from different boards and agencies who said it wasn't necessary: "You don't need to do it. Everything is fine. We're all open and transparent." I expect I will get those as well. It won't deter me. I am committed to moving this bill forward.

I thank the House and all the members who have spoken and shown support for the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(PROTECTION FOR ARTISTS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(PROTECTION DES ARTISTES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 7, standing in the name of Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to artists. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Tabuns?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like the bill to be sent to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we agree that the bill be sent to that standing committee? Agreed. So ordered.

MOTOR VEHICLE DEALERS
AMENDMENT ACT
(DISCLOSURE OF LEMONS), 2009
LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE COMMERCE
DES VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES
(DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS
CONCERNANT LES VÉHICULES
DE PIÈTRE QUALITÉ)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 8.

Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 164, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2002. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Flynn?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly? So ordered.

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC
MATTERS ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 9.

Mr. Craitor has moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal

boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Craitor?

Mr. Kim Craitor: I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? So ordered.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 109, An Act respecting apologies / Loi concernant la présentation d'excuses.

Bill 118, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of devices with display screens and hand-held communication and entertainment devices and to amend the Public Vehicles Act with respect to car pool vehicles / Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'interdire l'usage d'appareils à écran et d'appareils portatifs de télécommunications et de divertissement et modifiant la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun à l'égard des véhicules de covoiturage.

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

Bill 147, An Act to proclaim Holodomor Memorial Day / Loi proclamant le Jour commémoratif de l'Holodomor.

Bill 161, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2009.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Wynne has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1619.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Granum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Tilloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Witchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Woridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Wunro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Wurdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Yaqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Y'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Ontario budget

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 6232

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller 6232

Peel Memorial Hospital

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey 6233

Beyond the Blue Box

Mr. Lou Rinaldi 6233

Ordre de la Pléiade

M. Phil McNeely 6233

Toronto West courthouse

Ms. Laurel C. Broten 6233

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Property Tax Deferral Act, 2009, Bill 171, Mr. Shurman, Mr. Kormos, Mr. Sergio / Loi de 2009 sur le report des impôts fonciers, projet de loi 171, M. Shurman, M. Kormos, M. Sergio

First reading agreed to 6234

Mr. Peter Shurman 6234

MOTIONS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly

Hon. David Caplan 6234

Motion agreed to 6234

Appointment of chief medical officer of health

Hon. David Caplan 6234

Motion agreed to 6235

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 6235

Mme France Gélinas 6235

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Cemeteries

Mr. Jeff Leal 6236

Pension plans

Mr. O'Toole 6236

Road safety

Mr. Michael Prue 6236

Child custody

Mr. Kim Craitor 6237

Pension plans

Mr. John O'Toole 6237

Professional hockey franchise

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 6237

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle 6238

Cemeteries

Mr. Jeff Leal 6238

Air quality

Mr. Charles Sousa 6238

Tom Longboat

Mr. Mike Colle 6238

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Protection for Artists), 2009, Bill 165, Mr. Tabuns / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (protection des artistes), projet de loi 165, M. Tabuns

Mr. Peter Tabuns 6239

Mr. Vic Dhillon 6240

Mr. John O'Toole 6241

Mr. Michael Prue 6242

Mrs. Laura Albanese 6244

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette 6245

Mr. Khalil Ramal 6245

Mr. Peter Tabuns 6245

Motor Vehicle Dealers Amendment Act (Disclosure of Lemons), 2009, Bill 164, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur le commerce des véhicules automobiles (divulgaration de renseignements concernant les véhicules de piètre qualité), projet de loi 164, M. Flynn

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 6246

Mr. John O'Toole 6248

Mr. Peter Tabuns 6249

Mr. Jeff Leal 6251

Mr. Kim Craitor 6252

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti 6252

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 6253

Transparency in Public Matters Act, 2009, Bill 159, Mr. Craitor / Loi de 2009 sur la transparence des questions d'intérêt public, projet de loi 159, M. Craitor

Mr. Kim Craitor 6253

Mr. Ernie Hardeman 6255

Mr. Michael Prue 6256

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey 6258

Mr. John O'Toole 6259

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn 6259

Mr. Kim Craitor 6260

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Protection for Artists), 2009, Bill 165, Mr. Tabuns / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (protection des artistes), projet de loi 165, M. Tabuns	
Second reading agreed to.....	6261
Motor Vehicle Dealers Amendment Act (Disclosure of Lemons), 2009, Bill 164, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur le commerce des véhicules automobiles (divulcation de renseignements concernant les véhicules de piètre qualité), projet de loi 164, M. Flynn	
Second reading agreed to.....	6261
Transparency in Public Matters Act, 2009, Bill 159, Mr. Craitor / Loi de 2009 sur la transparence des questions d'intérêt public, projet de loi 159, M. Craitor	
Second reading agreed to.....	6261
Royal assent / Sanction royale	
The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson).....	6261

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 23 April 2009 / Jeudi 23 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2009, Bill 139, Mr. Fonseca / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (agences de placement temporaire), projet de loi 139, M. Fonseca	
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6213
Mr. Vic Dhillon.....	6218
Mr. Peter Shurman	6218
Mme France Gélinas	6219
Mr. Rick Johnson	6219
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6219
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6220
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	6220
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	6221

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	6222
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6222
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6222
Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	6222
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6222
Hon. John Milloy	6222
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6222
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	6222

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Pension plans

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6222
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6222

Ontario budget

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6223
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6223

Pension plans

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6224
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6224

Pension plans

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6224
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6225

Taxation

Mr. Ted Arnott.....	6225
Hon. Michael Bryant.....	6225

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6226
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6226

Violent crime

Mrs. Laura Albanese	6226
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	6227

Green power generation

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6227
Hon. George Smitherman.....	6227

Pension plans / Régimes de retraite

Mme France Gélinas	6228
L'hon. Dalton McGuinty	6228

Agri-food industry

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	6228
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6228

Nurses

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6229
Hon. David Caplan.....	6229

Pension plans

Mr. Michael Prue	6230
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	6230

Water quality

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	6230
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6230

School transportation funding

Mr. John Yakabuski	6231
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6231

Protection for workers

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6231
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	6231

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. John O'Toole	6232
------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Ontario budget

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6232
-----------------------	------

Markham Stouffville Hospital fundraiser

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	6232
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
XI
-D23

Government
Publications



No. 140

N° 140

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 27 April 2009

Lundi 27 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 avril 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for personal thought and inner reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I have a bit of a list here for welcoming people. There are going to be names that I miss, but I know that the individual members will—today we are privileged to have the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and members of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. We want to welcome warmly all of the guests that are here: Chief Dan Parkinson from Cornwall, who is the new president; Chief Kent Moore; Chief Dan Rivett; Chief Bob Herman; Chief Rene Berger; Deputy Commissioner Chris Lewis; Deputy Chief Bob Kates; Chief Brian Mullan; Chief Richard Laperriere; Chief Denis Poole; Chief Mike Metcalfe; Deputy Chief Mark Neelin; Deputy Chief Thomlinson; Inspector Steve Beckett; Chief Gary Smith; Deputy Chief Joe Matthews; Chief Matt Torigian; Chief Derek McElveny; Chief Ian Davidson; Mary Smiley, who's the chair of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards; along with other members.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to introduce Hook Avenue residents who are spending the day here at Queen's Park: Marla DiGiacomo, Mary Boudart, Roxanne MacKenzie, Megan Finlayson, Glenn Sernyk, Bryce Smith, Roxanne McKenzie, Margaret Marissen, Dominique Beaulieu, Angela Rentzelos, Dawn Elaserch, Carol Ursa, John Sweeney, Jonathon Wilkinson, Claude Bergeron and Sylvia Bergeron. Welcome all.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to welcome to the east gallery the deputy chief of the great city of London, Ian Peer, who is with us here today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of this Legislature be permitted to wear red carnations this morning in recognition of Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I welcome today to question period Bruce Bishins, Simon Parry and Paul Vynslysky. Each have been affected by the Conquest closure. I'm pleased that they're here today.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce the Honourable Pauline Browes, former member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre, in the west members' gallery.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome two famous guests from my riding of Durham: One of them is the chief of Durham Regional Police, Mike Ewles, as well as Mike Roche, who is a leader in the MS Society for Durham region. I'd like to welcome them here to Queen's Park today.

Hon. David Caplan: I too was going to introduce Mike Roche, from the MS Society, but there are several others: We have Jeanette Elliott, Lynda DaSilva, Andrea Butcher-Milne, Gordon Keith, Barbara Dickson, Jan Richardson, Stacey Trottier-Mousseau, Yassemin Cohan-im and Mike Augustine, all here to bring awareness to multiple sclerosis.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome to the House today—I'm not sure where they are at this point—Jeanette Elliott, chair of the Simcoe county chapter of the MS Society, along with Susan Latter—I know that Kim Steele has coordinated a lot of this today. I'm not sure whether the minister mentioned Deputy Commissioner Chris Lewis, who is here in the House today. I have already met with him.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I would like to introduce a good friend and a member of the Lakeshore police services board, Mike Fenchack, all the way from the great county of Essex.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to welcome Chief Armand La Barge, from York region.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to introduce today a high school buddy of mine who grew up to become chief of police for the city of Brantford, Derek McElveny, and also the police services board chair, Mr. Larry Kings. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Mike Colle: I would like to introduce the great transit advocate and chair of the region of York, Bill Fisch.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would like to welcome Jan Richardson, who is here with the MS Society, and deputy chief of police Al Williams, who are both here from my riding.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to welcome Deputy Chief Bob Percy, from Halton region, to the House this morning.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome the police chief from Hamilton, Brian Mullan—if he's brought anyone else, I didn't get the names.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Joining me are Chief Ewles, Deputy Chief Whiteway and chair of the police services board, Terry Clayton. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome, in the Speaker's Gallery today, Michael Barrett,

chief executive officer, and Norm Gamble, board chair, of the South West LHIN. Welcome to Queen's Park.

To anyone who is feeling left out with our massive round of introductions today, welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance: Will you confirm in the House today that your new sales tax grab will raise the price of gasoline, mutual fund investment fees, morning coffee and doughnuts, home heating fuel, home electricity, natural gas, home Internet service, home TV service, cellphone charges, rink rental fees and magazine subscriptions. Can you please confirm the accuracy of that list and tell us what the impact of that tax grab will be on a typical Ontario middle-class family?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can confirm is that this government is cutting small-business taxes by 18%; I can confirm that we're cutting the manufacturing and processing tax by 17%; I can confirm that we're cutting the general corporate tax rate by close to 33%; and finally, unlike the member opposite who votes against everything this government does, I can confirm we're cutting personal taxes by \$10.6 billion: the right response at the right time for this province and its people.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, thank you. I don't think the minister quite answered my question on that long and growing list of everyday items that are going to take even more taxes out of the pocketbooks of middle-class families and seniors. In fact, at the worst possible time when middle-class families are making difficult choices between paying the bills at the end of the month and filling up their grocery carts, Dalton McGuinty wants to go back at them with this massive sales tax grab. According to the *Toronto Star*—we always believe what we read in the *Toronto Star*—an internal government memo is now calling on ministers to go out and try to shore up support for your ill-advised tax grab.

Minister, wouldn't it be better to just drop your ill-advised tax grab altogether and get your ministers working on job creation for Ontario families instead?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me just tell the member opposite what others have said about the government's plan. Let's talk about Jack Mintz, the Palmer Chair in Public Policy at the University of Calgary: "Sales tax harmonization will reap large benefits to the Ontario economy. The McGuinty government will go down in history for its leadership in moving ahead with a major tax reform that will only help the Ontario economy in the long run."

That's what it's about. It's about rebuilding this economy as we come out of a world recession. It's about improving our competitiveness. It's about building new jobs

in the 21st century. It's not about that member saying, "No," and other members saying "Well, we'd do it, but we'd lower the rate." It's about taking a position, standing by it, building the long-term confidence in this economy and, ultimately, the ability to preserve our public health care system and our public education system and provide jobs for the thousands of people in Ontario who want new jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll tell the minister why he's going down in history. It's for the bizarre decision to hike taxes by some \$2.5 billion on middle-class families in the depths of an economic recession.

Let's look at one particular item: the cost of your new sales tax on gasoline. For a typical car, a Honda Civic for example, at a modest 80 cents per litre, it would cost a typical family more than \$200 per year because of your new sales tax grab. Minister does your Premier's internal memo also explain why it makes sense to increase the cost of travelling to work, taking your kids to swimming lessons or trying to find a way to visit family, particularly in the depths of a recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite forgets to tell people that we have the largest sales tax credit in Canada coming for those people, that Ontarians earning less than \$80,000 a year will see a cut in their overall taxes.

Let me remind the member what the Ontario Conservative Party wrote in their 2009 pre-budget submission. Here's what he said as finance critic: "The official opposition calls on this government to heed the call of the federal government and take immediate action to fix Ontario's uncompetitive tax structure." They say one thing and then say another thing. One member up there says to implement it but lower the rate; another member over there says it's the right thing.

This government has the interest of the Ontario economy and Ontario people at heart. We have the right plan to rebuild growth in this economy. When this world recession comes to an end, we will be bigger, we will be better, and we will be stronger.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Finance: There are, no doubt, two different visions. Our vision is to lower the tax burden to help create jobs and help middle-class families. Yours is to go after the pocketbooks of families and seniors in the province.

The minister knows full well that this past February almost 28,000 jobs were lost in the construction sector. Instead of targeting taxes that are getting in the way of job creation, the government is going to make the housing crisis even worse with its new sales tax grab, meaning the cost of housing will be out of reach for middle-class families in the GTA, Ottawa and other urban centres. I say to the minister, the McGuinty government can help revive the housing market through a one-year

suspension of the land transfer tax, which would save homebuyers almost \$3,000 on the purchase of a \$300,000 home.

Will you deliver hope to the workers and to middle-class families through the suspension of the land transfer tax?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This member just told us recently we shouldn't be spending on infrastructure. He wanted to take that stimulus out of the economy. He tells us not to cut corporate taxes; then he's going to vote against that. He tells us not to cut personal taxes; then he wants to vote against that.

The Conservative Party is adrift and lost. They don't have a view of the future of this province. They don't have a single idea about making this economy grow faster. I say to the member opposite, vote for our tax cuts; vote for the \$10.6 billion in tax cuts; vote for a more efficient sales tax. Vote for a stronger future when the time comes in this Legislature, sir, because we will be bigger, we will be stronger, we will come through this, as the world economy will. I look forward to hearing at least some element of consistency in the point of view of that party opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It would have been interesting, actually, if the member had the courage to put his sales tax grab in his budget bill, to see how many Liberal members would have voted it down. They're hearing the same thing in their ridings about this tax grab from middle-class families and seniors that we are.

Minister, I believe in private sector job creation, and I believe that when the auto sector is in tough times we need construction firing on all cylinders to create jobs in our economy and to help middle-class families.

The Ontario Real Estate Association has estimated that your sales tax grab will increase the cost of buying even a modestly priced home by some \$2,000, and the tax on a new home will be even higher.

Minister, will you at least commit to cancelling your sales tax grab, to provide relief to our housing industry and to help struggling families pay their bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite again only tells part of the story. He neglects to talk about will be the most generous home purchase credit around in Canada when the new harmonized single tax is in place. In fact, when other provinces have gone to a single sales tax, new home sales have actually gone up, even though they didn't have the credit we did.

Our economy is in an unprecedented world crisis. We have laid out a plan. It is a challenging plan that calls upon all of us to work together. That's why we're cutting corporate taxes. That's why we're cutting small business taxes. That's why Ontario families will be paying less overall in taxes. We will have a more efficient, more productive economy that will seize the opportunity when the world economy begins to recover. That's what this budget is about. That's what this party is about. That's why we have a clear and consistent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: What Ontario is experiencing is a crisis of leadership. Dalton McGuinty's failed leadership has chased some 300,000 manufacturing jobs from the province and made Ontario dead last in economic growth in all of Canada.

I say to the minister, we need jobs created today; we need to help out middle-class families today. The land transfer tax will help create jobs in construction immediately—if you give a land-transfer-tax holiday and help families purchase their first home. Secondly, Minister, I call upon you to have a tax holiday on new hires. Eliminate the payroll tax on new hires to help small businesses hire more people and create job opportunities for middle-class families. Will the Minister of Finance act on either or both of those initiatives to create jobs and bring hope to families in Ontario today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leading manufacturers in this province have all said that the most important thing we can do is a single sales tax that will decrease the cost of our exports.

The member opposite won't listen to me. Maybe he'll listen to Jim Flaherty, who said that the single sales tax is the single most important step that provinces with RSTs can take to stimulate new business investment, create jobs and improve Canada's overall economic competitiveness. He may want to talk to one of his principal supporters for the Conservative leadership, a fellow who used to be the Premier of Ontario. Here's what he said: "Provinces are further encouraged to harmonize their provincial sales taxes with the federal goods and services tax (GST), which already exempts business inputs. This would provide a double benefit by also reducing by one half the paperwork required for businesses to collect and remit...."

Interjection: Who said that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mike Harris said that. I don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. More than 100 people in Mexico have already died from the swine flu, and now there are six Canadian cases. Ontarians want assurances that this government can handle a potential global pandemic. On their behalf I ask you, is Ontario prepared?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question. I am, of course, always concerned about the health of Ontarians, and Ontario is working very closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada concerning the occurrence of human swine flu in Mexico and the United States.

The member asked specifically, is Ontario prepared? Here's what Ontario is doing. We have alerted physicians

and hospitals in the province to be vigilant in keeping a lookout for any cases exhibiting symptoms of influenza-like illness amongst patients, particularly those who have travelled to Mexico in the two weeks. We've had regular teleconferences, and we'll network with local medical officers of health this week, providing updates as we receive them from federal authorities. We've sent written directives to all public health units, providing recommended actions they can share with health providers in their jurisdiction.

There is much more, but I want to quote Dr. Allison McGeer of Mount Sinai Hospital. She says, "We should be celebrating the level of transparency of communication.... This is an"—

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: At a press conference Thursday, it took more than 10 minutes to get a straight answer from the acting chief medical officer of health about whether or not there were any suspected cases in Ontario, and after 10 minutes, Dr. Williams said there were 10 cases under investigation in this province.

My question is this: Are they still under investigation? How many have been ruled out, and when will the public be notified?

Hon. David Caplan: I was finishing up my quote from Dr. McGeer and I will finish it. She said, "We should be celebrating the level of transparency of communication.... This is an excellent marker for how things have gotten better since SARS in terms of us being able to coordinate things internationally."

In fact, there are no confirmed cases of this particular flu here in the province of Ontario. There are, on an active and ongoing basis, about 10 to 12 cases that officials are looking at and doing the testing for. In fact, some of those tests come back negative, and I do expect that others will emerge as individuals present themselves to physicians and there is additional testing.

I can tell you that I have tremendous confidence in Dr. David Williams. He was, of course, the official in his public health network that was able to catch and contain listeria and the listeriosis outbreak here in the province of Ontario. I know that everything is being done—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's exactly communications that are the key here. Ontario's public health units, the backbone of defence against pandemics, continue to be sorely unprepared. More than one third—and this minister knows it—of Ontario's public health units lack a permanent chief medical officer of health.

When will this government understand that as long as public health is under-resourced in this province, Ontarians are at greater risk?

Hon. David Caplan: The member's comments, first of all, are inaccurate. They're also unhelpful. This member, unfortunately, should not be sharing that kind of information. In fact, resources for public health have only

increased under this government, unlike the experiences under the New Democrats, where there were cuts to public health and downloading of public health to the municipal level. In fact, there is a full-time medical officer of health in every health unit in the province of Ontario, but some are in acting positions, which is why, with our agreement with the Ontario Medical Association, we have worked to enhance the resources and supports for those individuals to help with the recruitment and the retention of them. In fact, just last week, I had the opportunity to introduce Dr. Arlene King to this House. She has identified this as an area of priority for her going forward, working with public health officials in the province of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The bottom line is, this government hasn't learned. It has not learned from the SARS—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sorry; the new question is for the Acting Premier.

The bottom line is, the government hasn't learned. We want clear communication and the people of this province deserve that straight-out information, and we are not getting it. I'm asking this minister very clearly, this Acting Premier very clearly, and the question is this—I'm going to quote because I think it's important. What was said in the *Globe and Mail* is this, from the chief medical officer of health—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Canada's chief public health officer said this in the *Globe and Mail*: "Nobody should take this for granted in any way. It"—the fact that the cases have been mild—"doesn't mean we won't see either more severe illness or more potential deaths."

The US has declared swine flu a public health emergency. I ask again: What is this government doing to prepare the people of Ontario for this possible pandemic?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: The member allows her rhetoric to get the better of her. Unfortunately for her, the facts of the case are that public health officials here in the Ministry of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada are working very closely to keep each other informed, but more importantly, to keep the public informed about what to do.

I want to emphasize that Ontario has an excellent public health surveillance system. Ontarians should feel confident that their public health care providers are closely monitoring the situation and that the system is in place to be able to respond.

I am and have been in constant contact with the federal Minister of Health about the situation, have had ongoing discussions—in fact, just this morning—with the

chief medical officer of health in the province of Ontario, have provided and will be providing information, and have made the offer to all party leaders and critics to be able to be apprised of the situation.

I think the member has an unfortunate sense that she has some kind of a political issue here. Regrettably, this is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The cases in Canada—four in Nova Scotia and two in BC—are both linked to travel to Mexico. Are the Ontario people being told not to travel to Mexico? I don't believe they are.

In October 2005, then-Health Minister George Smitherman said this in this House: "Obviously, in an environment where there's lots of discussion about a pandemic, with a lot of uncertainty, frankly, about what the toll of that will be, it's important to provide people with timely information." But there wasn't timely information during SARS and the more recent listeriosis outbreak. Has this government learned from its past bungling, and does it finally have an appropriate communications strategy to deal with an outbreak?

Hon. David Caplan: The leader of the third party is incredibly irresponsible. I should hasten to say that in fact the appropriate level of communication has gone out and will continue to go out. But I would say this: The Ontario government does not issue travel advisories, as the member well knows. That is something that the Public Health Agency of Canada and the federal government will decide, if that is the appropriate step to take.

The World Health Organization has not issued a travel advisory for any of these jurisdictions, and I think for the member to suggest that a Ministry of Health of a province would want to be able to take that step ahead of the World Health Organization or a national body is, in a word, as I said, irresponsible, and beneath what a leader in this province should be able to do.

I would encourage this member to get some facts. I would encourage this member to work with us. I would want to share with the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact remains that the people of Ontario are very, very concerned about this potential pandemic. They need to have information and they need to have it very quickly. If nothing else, we have learned that lesson in this province, and this minister should have learned that lesson. So I'm going to ask one last time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'd just ask the Minister of Culture to relax a bit, please. Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm going to ask one last time: What is the process for keeping Ontarians informed about the suspected cases and about the current situation with this potential pandemic? Are the cases confirmed? Ninety-six hours later,

surely Ontarians need to have the information about what's happening on this file.

Hon. David Caplan: Ontarians do have the information on what's happening on this file. The only one who's muddying the waters is the member opposite.

We have medical professionals who are providing that information not only to Ontarians but to Canadians. We have a coordinated response and we have a public health surveillance system which is well in place and is working.

We have indeed learned the lessons from SARS. I understand that Dr. Donald Low was on CBC Newsworld earlier today saying that our ability to respond to, to identify, to contain and to control these kinds of situations has increased because of our understanding of what happened during SARS, and that Ontarians should have tremendous confidence in the ability of this province to respond.

I would encourage this member to be responsible as she talks to Ontarians. Her rhetoric is not helpful in this situation, and she should, I think, take pause and want to make sure that she acts in a manner befitting a leader in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Throughout public hearings on Bill 150, we have heard repeatedly from presenters who are very concerned with the effect your power and tax grab disguise will have on the price of electricity in Ontario. Credible groups such as the consumers' council of Ontario, the Association of Power Producers of Ontario and the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario have all expressed their worry and concern about prices under your plan. All the while, to say the least, you've been duplicitous and inconsistent, saying one thing one day—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw his comment, please.

1100

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw—saying one thing one day and something quite different on another. Minister, you're not fooling anyone. It is time to admit that you haven't been forthcoming with the facts. It's time to be honest with Ontario. What is the total cost of the final implementation of Bill 150, your power and tax grab?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to say to the honourable member that unlike him, we've appreciated the broad view, the broad perspective that was brought to the debate, and we thank all of the members who participated throughout the seven days of hearings. They travelled to different parts of our province. They heard a wide variety of perspectives, and through the process at committee clause-by-clause, we're looking forward to the discussion around the amendments which would benefit and improve the bill. We want to say to the honourable member that that's the spirit we bring to it.

On the issue of support in the province for this, I just draw to the honourable member's attention that polls showing overwhelming support for the Green Energy Act in the province of Ontario have come out that show that 87% of respondents are in support of it.

On the price issue, we see 1% a year on the average bill for the people of the province of Ontario, but mostly we see opportunities for them to reduce the amount of energy and electricity that they use.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, your charade has to stop. The people deserve nothing less than the truth.

Let me read you a quote: "The point I'm trying to make is that the government has an obligation to ensure that it tells the people of this province that, as a result of its response to increasing rates, it's promoting conservation, and the initial effect of conservation will be to cause those rates to increase even further." That was Dalton McGuinty. He was really big on disclosure and coming clean when he was in opposition. Apparently, he doesn't feel that way anymore.

Minister, your power and tax disguise will have a real financial impact on families here in Ontario. You have invented job numbers which you cannot substantiate. You refuse to come clean on the true cost of this bill's implementation. You are now bringing forth amendments proving how flawed your bill really is. What is the financial impact of your power and tax grab, and will your proposed amendments have any effect on its final implementation cost?

Hon. George Smitherman: We want to thank the honourable member and the voice of a party that has, through the course of this debate, re-established itself as the tie-in to the coal barons in the province of Ontario. Through this debate, what we have witnessed is the regression of policy on the part of the official opposition. But through the amendments which we sincerely offer, we hope to encourage that party to lend support and to come forward and support the Green Energy Act.

As an example, we're going to provide an opt-out provision for the home energy audit. We're going to make sure that the principle of consultation is embedded in the legislation. We're going to substantially eliminate those powers that were raised by the honourable member around enforcement. We take these sincere steps, as we seek that party to come forward and to support this bill. All across the province of Ontario, communities, local distribution communities, municipalities and First Nations await the opportunity to bring new, renewable energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Pregnant women in Ontario are increasingly worried about finding good health care for their children and for childbirth, worried about securing childcare for their babies, worried about new expenses and tax hikes

on everyday essentials that this government is about to implement on them. Now these women are worried about their jobs, too. According to the Ontario Human Rights Legal Support Centre, dozens and dozens of women have recently lost or are fearful of losing their jobs simply because they are pregnant. What is this government going to do to protect their rights?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. What I say to the member and I say to all Ontario workers is that any worker who feels that they have been unjustly treated in the workplace should contact the Ministry of Labour. Go onto our website. Because employees covered under the Employment Standards Act, 2000—an employer is obligated to meet the rights of the Employment Standards Act.

Also within the employment standards, though, I say to the member, an employer may terminate the employment services of an employee at any time, including the restructuring of a company, as long as the reasons for termination do not contravene the protections afforded an employee under the pregnancy and parental leave provisions of the act. So I say to the member and I say again to all Ontario workers, if they feel that they've been unjustly treated in the workplace—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like this minister to see his job restructured because he's pregnant.

Human rights workers have never seen so many firings of pregnant women—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind all of our guests that you're certainly welcome to observe but not participate in the debates. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Human rights workers have never seen so many firings of pregnant women. One pregnant mom, Brandi Maher of Orillia, was laid off from her hotel housekeeping job. She now fears that she will have to go on welfare because her job won't be there for her. New mother Ilinka Petkovski was let go three days before she was to return to work. She gave up on the Ministry of Labour and the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal because their processes are too difficult to deal with.

Why won't this government enforce the Employment Standards Act to protect women and new mothers and ensure that this outrageous situation is shut down now and forever in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This government works very hard to ensure that all Ontario workers' rights are protected in this province. That's why we've actually modernized a great deal of the employment standards, the labour relations and the occupational health and safety in this province.

I say again to the member that there are safety nets in place to help with anybody who has been unjustly treated—through the human rights, through legal action

centres—to be able to help these workers. I also say to anybody who feels that their employer has contravened the Employment Standards Act, contact our ministry and one of our officers will be able to investigate.

RURAL AND NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The challenges facing rural and northern communities across Ontario are especially difficult and complex when it comes to health care, and this is very true in my own riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. In many cases, health care facilities are fewer and farther apart, with significant travel distances between locations. It becomes more difficult to recruit and retain health care providers, and our health care providers are asked to carry out a wider range of medical and emergency services in comparison to their urban counterparts. My constituents want to know how our government is going to address the serious concerns that they have about rural and northern communities and how health care will be addressed for them.

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for not only the question, but for her advocacy on behalf of rural and northern Ontarians, because our government is committed to providing quality health care for all Ontarians, regardless of where they live. I recognize the distinct challenges that rural and northern communities face, and I want you to know that our government is committed to examining these issues and providing a provincial framework to support northern and rural communities.

As part of the first stage, I'm very pleased to inform the member and this House that our government will establish a northern and rural health care panel to collate and review the current activities under way across the province. The panel will provide recommendations to identify unique needs. It will coordinate metrics and targets to be achieved by thorough strategic investments, and it will examine the existing programs, the supports that we have already put in place and the services targeted to northern and rural Ontario. I know this panel will help us to do the right thing for rural and northern Ontario residents, and I look forward to seeing its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to hear you will be implementing this northern and rural advisory panel to address the unique needs of both northern and rural communities.

I hear from my constituents that a number of hospitals across the province are facing budgetary pressures this year. This is a significant concern to my community, which is reliant on our hospitals to provide quality care and services. What are you doing to ensure that the hospitals have the resources they need to provide the best care and the care that our people deserve here in Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: Well, I want to thank the member for the question. It's an excellent one.

We will continue to invest more into our hospitals and the health care sector overall, just as we have each and every single year that this government has been in office. Hospital funding in Ontario has increased from \$10.9 billion in 2003-04 to \$15.4 billion in 2009-10, and overall, a 37% increase because of the investments made by members on this side of the House. That includes a 2.1% increase in the overall base funding formula to meet the service requirements of hospitals.

I can tell you that our partners are very pleased with this investment. For example, Ron Gagnon, president and CEO of the Sault Area Hospital, says the 2.1% increase to base funding for the hospital is “very positive for us and for our patients.” We're also enhancing services outside of hospitals in creating 150 family health teams, and we're adding 50 more over the coming year, not to mention 25 additional—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1110

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Consumer Services: Why did you, as minister, ignore a call at TICO's 2008 AGM for a public inquiry into the 2006 failure at One Step Travel and why, after seven of its 10 years in business, did One Step Travel continue to operate even when TICO knew it lacked sufficient working capital, particularly in three of those years when it was running on negative capital?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this: In the event of a travel company's failure, the first priority of TICO and our government is to make sure that people get home safely, quickly and as fast as we can do that. I know some of the concerns were raised about how One Step's failure was handled by TICO at the last annual general meeting. In that annual general meeting and after that, the board of directors of TICO have decided to conduct a third party review. That third party review is now in progress. I look forward to the report of the third party review, and if any recommendations come out of it, I will look at them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: While One Step failed, three consecutive Liberal ministers took no steps to protect consumers. Despite industry and consumer warnings and demands for TICO and this minister to call a public inquiry into One Step and TICO, you ignored them. They asked you for meetings. They are here today. You refused to meet with them until now, of course, you've called an audit because your government is clearly embarrassed.

My question for the Minister of Consumers: Will the minister admit that had he met with the TICO task force, the travel agents and travel wholesalers who were elected to sit on a TICO task force, information about TICO's inactions and lack of diligence in the One Step matter could have prevented similar inaction in the Conquest case?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to welcome the member to this issue. This actually happened in 2006. Let me remind the member that TICO and the Travel Industry Act was, in fact, set by the previous Conservative government. I hope the member is not trying to suggest that we should not have helped the travellers when One Step failed and that we should not have brought them home. I hope she is not suggesting that. Our first priority is to get people home quickly, I already said that the third party review is currently under way. I look forward to their report, and if there are any recommendations that they make that we need to implement, we will look at them.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today the TTC commissioners will formally approve a proposal by Bombardier to deliver 204 low-floor streetcars to the TTC for \$1.3 billion. This is good news and it means hundreds of new, good-paying jobs at Bombardier's Thunder Bay plant and its part suppliers throughout Ontario. The city has committed to paying its one-third share. Will the province announce today that it will be a partner and provide the one-third share to this vital, job-creating project?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the Toronto member of the New Democratic Party for getting that caucus back in support of public transit. We were all so disappointed when they worked against the expansion of the York subway expansion past York University and into what your former leader referred to as the sparsely populated York region.

On the matter of streetcar purchases, we note Toronto's announcement on Friday. I think some people were surprised to note that there was not a funding source attached to it. I spoke with the mayor, and the city is certainly contemplating making an application through available infrastructure funds which would be, as an example, the stimulus funds that the governments of Ontario and Canada are participating in. As that has a deadline of May 1, and as the city has not made application, I couldn't comment further, but we're certainly interested in supporting the project. We have always been supportive of the work that Bombardier does in Thunder Bay.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: For me and us, there's real urgency in the matter. The Bombardier contract has a June 27 expiration date, and Toronto streetcar hopes will go off the rails if this funding isn't found by then. The question is, will the minister announce that the province will provide its one-third share to this vital, job-creating project?

Hon. George Smitherman: I must confess to being slightly confused. Is the honourable member suggesting that the announcement on Friday by the city of Toronto—that they were not in a position to actually be in contract for what they announced they were undertaking? As a Torontonian, I'm a bit surprised by that.

At the heart of it, like I say to the honourable member, we've demonstrated strongly our commitment to public transit. We're glad to see that Bombardier has been selected as the proposed proponent for the city of Toronto's work. There are mechanisms which come into play May 1, which is quite soon. As best I know from my conversation on Friday with the mayor, the city of Toronto is anticipating making an application for stimulus funds. We will wait for them to do that, but we look favourably on all opportunities to continue to support the emergence of public transit in the greater Toronto area, and we welcome that party's return to that level of support.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: A question for the Minister of Labour: Employees participating in the federal live-in caregiver program are among Ontario's most vulnerable workers. Many of my constituents, from all walks of life, have contacted my office in regard to the issue of social justice. Many hard-working caregivers are being exploited and are being charged thousands of dollars, which they are forced to pay through alternative illegal work if their contracts are cancelled. Minister, earlier this month you announced your ministry would introduce legislation to help protect vulnerable temporary foreign workers in Ontario. You also announced that you would provide resources for these workers to help them understand and protect their employment rights.

Minister, has there been any progress to date on any of these initiatives?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I would like to thank the member for the question and for his advocacy on this very important matter. The Ministry of Labour has, indeed, made progress on this front. I'm pleased to inform this House today that we have set up a toll-free hotline that went into effect this morning. It's now up and running to receive calls from participants in the federal live-in caregiver program. The hotline will provide information to these employees about their rights under the Employment Standards Act and will assist them in making claims if they believe that their employer is not providing them with their entitlements. The hotline will also be supported by a specially trained team to assist them in filing claims and link them to dedicated investigative officers.

This is just one of the initiatives that we have brought forward to date, and I'm pleased to say more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you for the response. Many caregivers will be glad to hear that our government is taking concrete action to help these vulnerable exploited workers. I'm sure that live-in caregivers across the province who are part of the federal program are also glad to know that this government is concerned about workplace rights. Employees participating in the federal live-in caregiver program are among Ontario's most vulnerable groups. They're subject to ongoing exploitation.

Minister, you mentioned that this helpline is not the only resource that your ministry is providing for these

workers. Can you tell us what other steps your ministry is taking to ensure that these caregivers are protected and supported in this most fragile state they are in?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: In addition to the toll-free hotline, my ministry has also put together a fact sheet for live-in caregivers who are participants in the federal program. This fact sheet provides information on wages, hours of work, overtime pay and other rights under the Employment Standards Act. It has been posted on the Ministry of Labour website, and copies are being distributed to stakeholder groups and particularly community organizations that work with, help and represent live-in caregivers. In addition to community-based supports, we've also provided supports to participants in the federal live-in caregiver program. These services are available 24/7, 365 days a year, in 100 languages, for women who need information on matters as important as human rights, legal advice, housing, child welfare and health and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. In light of the 2003 SARS outbreak that saw about 300 hospitalizations and 44 deaths, and now in light of the global swine flu outbreak, it's important that we reassure the public that steps have been taken. In the Office of the Auditor General's 2007 annual report, there was an indication that the ministry survey had found that over one third of the public health units had not completed their local pandemic plans. Could you confirm that those have now all been completed?

Hon. David Caplan: I have asked Dr. Williams and the officials in the public health division of the Ministry of Health to follow up to ensure that in fact pandemic plans are prepared. As the member would know, we have been in negotiation with the Public Health Agency of Canada on pandemic planning across Canada.

I did take the opportunity, for example—when Minister Aglukkaq was first appointed, she came to Ontario. The first conversation we had was about concluding pandemic preparedness and the responses. This is a very important part of the coordination of who is responsible for what and how communication protocols work to make sure that we're able to alert individual medical practitioners and able to alert the public as well.

I think the member asks a very good question. I hope I've been able to provide a very clear answer to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think the answer I've received is that, no, not all of the public health units in the province have local plans, just as we don't have permanent medical officers of health.

My other question comes out of the same report. It indicated that the availability of sites where people could be isolated or quarantined for an extended time was limited,

and it indicated the ministry had no plans to look for other sites for future outbreaks, despite what happened in 2003. I just wonder, Minister of Health, if you are currently looking for suitable alternative isolation sites.

Hon. David Caplan: Also a very good question, and that is part of pandemic planning. Communication has gone out to ensure—and in fact, that's exactly what happens under the protocol, whether it would be sites that would be identified, antiviral stockpiles that would need to be in place, the whole host of things. The first and most important thing is the ability to identify. The next, of course, is the ability to contain. That's where isolation comes in. Lastly, but equally important, is the ability to control and the ability to eradicate those infectious diseases. All three elements are critical to an appropriate pandemic response. All three have been in contact with the chief medical officer of health and, through him and through the offices of the public health department of the Ministry of Health, to individual public health units across the province and to practitioners.

I thank the member for the questions. Those are appropriate, given the circumstances. Ontarians would want to know that there are appropriate protocols, communications—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Over the past two months, GO's west Toronto diamond piledriving has subjected residents to an unacceptable, ear-splitting noise. By all accounts, residents have suffered from vibrations equivalent to earthquakes of a three to four magnitude on the Richter scale. After the piledriving, Metrolinx plans on running over 400 dirty diesel trains per day, instead of the 40 running currently, along these same tracks.

Minister, why are you willing to put the residents of Toronto through such torture?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's an interesting way to describe it. May I say first of all, as I did previously in the House—and I've said this to Tony Ruprecht, the member for Davenport, to yourself and to the federal member Gerard Kennedy—this is indeed not a minor complaint for the people who reside in the area. It's a very genuine complaint. I have spoken to GO Transit about it. They recognize the concerns of the area residents. That is why they have begun meetings with affected neighbours in order to deal with each of the residents concerned. GO and its contractor are looking into a variety of technology designs and noise mitigation strategies. Different machinery, for example, is soon to be tested, and new sound mitigation strategies, including movable noise barriers, are being considered. GO, I am informed, is hopeful that it can improve the situation for area residents—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Minister, GO has been consistently unwilling to meet with residents regarding the damage they are causing to citizens, and Metrolinx, as you know, should be using electric trains when this project is completed. We all want affordable, clean public transit, yet we cannot build that infrastructure while causing permanent harm to residents in Toronto.

Minister, mediation is not enough. Will the government commit to stopping this project immediately until residents' voices are heard?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The great difficulty is, as the member would know—and I appreciate that Mr. Ruprecht and yourself and Mr. Kennedy represent people affected by this; I appreciate that very much. It's a major challenge, however, to try to build public transit which your political party, our party and at times the Conservative Party have been in favour of over the years. I know that we're trying—at least GO Transit is—as much as possible to mitigate those concerns. They're keeping a community liaison on site all day, every day. There is regular communication with you, and we delivered notices to all residents explaining the construction. We held two full days of public information centres and we continue to actively look for ways to lessen the impact of noise on the community and try to schedule work during daytime hours and to follow the city of Toronto's noise bylaws. It is a very difficult situation; I understand that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. As a member of the Standing Committee on General Government, I have heard many deputations from a wide variety of groups and individuals. During seven days of public hearings, travelling to Sault Ste. Marie, London and Ottawa, we heard from many groups and individuals, and they presented many thoughtful suggestions and amendments. Some of the issues raised by presenters as well as opposition members of the committee were related to mandatory home energy audits and the enforcement provisions. Given that the minister has spoken a number of times about looking forward to hearing how the bill can be improved, are you going to do anything to address these concerns that were raised through the hearings on audits?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the member from Huron-Bruce and, as I mentioned before, all the members of the committee for the hard work they did. We thank the committee chair and my parliamentary assistants, who both had a chance to participate. We've been listening carefully to the comments that have come in through the committee process and also on the EBR that the Ministry of the Environment has for views people offered about the way to improve the bill.

In two areas that I'd like to speak to, we are prepared to address concerns that have been raised. With respect to the mandatory nature of home energy audits, we have

moved forward with amendments that will allow buyers to opt out if the audit is not desired on their part. We've also proposed an amendment that would eliminate inspection and search powers related to home energy audits and the minimum energy efficiency standards for appliances and products. I would like to say that these are certainly in response to concerns that were raised by the official opposition as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Minister, many people will appreciate your clarification on these two issues. This amendment will ensure that homebuyers are aware of the home's energy efficiency and how they could improve it while still providing some flexibility.

Ontarians have made hundreds of constructive suggestions to make the proposed Green Energy Act even more effective in creating a greener economy for Ontario. Some of the comments were related to concerns about community consultation, potential health effects and our commitment to domestic content.

Would the minister tell us if he will be proposing any amendments that will address these concerns that were raised?

Hon. George Smitherman: We've also brought forward amendments that will lower the grounds for appeal under the Environmental Protection Act to protect against serious harm. We'll be creating a new section that clearly establishes the obligation for community consultation. We've brought in a stronger section with respect to the government's commitment to domestic content. We've clarified the procurement directives under the new directive authority focused only on renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, and that substantially addresses concerns from the NDP about that power being used related to nuclear. And we're enhancing the information documentation related to the development of conservation targets to ensure that it's transparent and publicly available so that the Office of the Environmental Commissioner has all that it needs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer?

Hon. George Smitherman: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In response to the heckling by the honourable member, I say that we have listened and therefore we have made amendments which improve the Green Energy Act, and we look forward to the support of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1130

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Next week is Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario. Thousands of Ontario families want to know if you are going to start providing the help that children with mental health problems need. More than 11,000 children are on a waiting list for help, and every day a child is on a list, he or she is becoming worse. Why do you let them sit on waiting lists, becoming worse and worse?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite that children's mental health is a very high priority for this government. I was very pleased that the Minister of Health has made mental health a priority, that he has brought children's mental health into the work that he is doing, and that there is a select committee of this Legislature looking at what we need to do to ensure that children do in fact get the support for mental health when they need it as close to home as possible. The ministry has been doing some very good work, and I'm sure in the supplementary I'll have an opportunity to talk about that.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I have asked you repeatedly in this House to provide the funding that is needed. The Auditor General has said that you are underfunding children's mental health. Your own roots of violence report recommended a funding increase. They say that it needed a \$200-million increase. Minister, why will you not help children receive the mental health funding they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will of course note that this is in fact a spend question, that the opposition is advocating for a \$200-million increase in children's mental health.

What I do want to talk about are some of the changes that we are making as we speak. We have released a strategy document called A Shared Responsibility, and we are working to implement that strategy. The very first step, which we have now almost completed, is a mapping of the services currently available. What we have in children's mental health right now are a number of organizations that deliver some services. We need to understand what is there for children in the province right now before we begin to make the improvements all of us know need to be made.

Some of the very exciting and promising work that we are doing is with telepsychiatry, which is expanding access to children in remote locations and rural areas, where they are actually getting access to psychiatric help—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last week, more than two dozen realtors working in Beaches–East York came to my constituency office to express their concerns over what they called this government's dreaded HST scheme. They asked me to ask you these two questions: Why is this government punishing homebuyers by making it even more expensive to purchase homes? And why is it shutting out taxpayers and realtors from expressing their displeasure by not having hearings?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We disagree with them. The one thing that we can do to help this economy grow is to lower the cost of our exports. We've also provided a very generous home tax credit that will benefit people across Ontario to effectively pay no single sales tax. Governments around the world have to respond. We have taken this course of action. We don't believe it's about this

interest group or that; we believe it's about what's best for all of Ontario. We think most people will see—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We think most people are prepared for a government that takes strong steps to ensure future growth in this economy, lowering the price of our exports, cutting personal taxes and corporate tax, which will actually, in our view, increase home sales once the Ontario economy deals with the world—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Unfortunately for the people who live in the GTA, nearly half of all homes in the greater Toronto area that are being built today are valued at over \$400,000. This means that a huge number of future homebuyers will get whacked for higher taxes for everything from home costs to real estate fees to legal fees and title search costs, and this government will shut down debate so that the public's outcries cannot even be heard.

My question: Why won't this government allow a democratic debate on the budget bill so that Ontarians, and particularly realtors, can express their concerns and offer suggestions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are. I would remind the member opposite that it doesn't affect resale homes, and I would remind the member opposite that at \$400,000, it affects 75% of new home sales, and there's a proportional amount that goes to \$500,000.

That member and his party wanted to raise the provincial sales tax. Today, you're worried about rising costs for families with a single sales tax, but you wrote to us and requested the Premier to raise the PST by 1%, a \$2-billion tax hike.

The plan we've laid out will see most—

Mr. Howard Hampton: When was that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Very recently, Mr. Speaker, under that member's signature.

I would remind those opposite that taxes for most Ontarians will be cut. This is the right plan that will help this economy recover once the world economy begins to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, as all of us know, recently there has been a governance review committee struck which made recommendations regarding the governance of our school boards. The committee was struck in the fall to consult with the education sector to discuss ways to modernize our governance.

I understand that the committee work has been submitted. We would like to know from the minister what process has led to the establishment of the committee, its work, and indeed its recommendations. If you could give us an idea of what kinds of recommendations have come from this committee to allow us the opportunity to

understand that we're moving into the 21st century in education, that in some of the changes we've made the governance has not applied to it, and now we're looking at ways that we can modernize that way of governance in the province of Ontario for public sectors.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for the question. As you will recall, more than 10 years ago there were some major changes made to school board governance in Ontario. Since that time, there have been a number of calls for a review of school board governance and clarification of roles.

What I did in October was I established a governance review committee and asked them to consult broadly and to report back, the point of this exercise being that we want to strengthen our school boards. We want to make sure that everyone understands how important they are as institutions in our local communities.

The recommendations have come back. There are 25 recommendations. The committee consulted across the province. It talked to trustees, directors of education, parent groups and representatives of 70 of the 72 school boards, so it's a very comprehensive review and recommendations.

At the core of the recommendations is the one that says school boards need to focus more on student achievement, so we'll be working—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome today Mr. Trevor Taylor, director for business development of PCI Geomatics in my riding of Richmond Hill, in the east members' gallery.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I have as my guest today in the east gallery Councillor Mark Gerretsen, who also happens to be my son, from the city of Kingston. He's here together with his friend Holly Wilson, and Mauro Sepe.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MERVIN DEWASHA

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge Mervin Dewasha from my riding of Dufferin-Caledon, who is one of only 14 people to receive the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in the field of technology and trades. Mr. Dewasha has been a long-time mentor for aboriginal youth entering the technology and trades fields. He's been leading the way for aboriginals across Canada for many years.

Only five years after graduating university, he was named the director of engineering for Indian and Northern Affairs in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Dewasha has always been active in his community. He was a proponent in developing health and safety standards for native reserves, he developed the first Indian housing building code, and he helped a First Nations community get their first-ever bank loan to build a school on a reserve.

Mr. Dewasha founded the Canadian Aboriginal Science and Engineering Association, a non-profit organization to increase opportunities for aboriginal youth to land careers in these fields. Mr. Dewasha and Neegan Burnside, located in Dufferin-Caledon, have completed approximately 1,200 projects for more than 200 First Nations communities across North America.

I am very proud to recognize Mervin Dewasha as a successful businessman, an accomplished aboriginal advocate, and now a national award winner.

SMOOTH ROCK FALLS HOSPITAL HÔPITAL DE SMOOTH ROCK FALLS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's with a certain amount of anticipation that I rise today in regard to the 60th anniversary of the hospital in Smooth Rock Falls. You'll know that communities across this province are struggling to maintain services within their communities when it comes to health care, with everything that's happening in the economy, and it's no different for the town of Smooth Rock Falls. They have lost their only employer there, making things rather difficult when it comes to being able to make sure the community has the type of employment it needs in order to make that city and that town as strong as possible.

One of the good-news items is that the hospital is there; it's still operating. We're now 60 years into operation of that hospital. It was started up by the Abitibi company that was there originally in order to run the pulp mill in Smooth Rock Falls. They made an investment, along with the community and the province, in order to start up the first hospital in Smooth Rock Falls, and since then we've been operating the hospital there for some now 60 years.

Le monde de Smooth Rock Falls a beaucoup de quoi être fier. On a vu beaucoup de progrès dans le système de santé dans la communauté de Smooth Rock Falls. On regarde cet hôpital, qui est différent d'autres dans le sens que dans l'hôpital lui-même, il y a des lits de soins de longue durée, une vingtaine de lits. Donc, c'est une cohabitation, une place pour les aînés, et, en même temps, il y a de la place pour être capable d'opérer cet hôpital dans cette communauté.

Mercredi soir à 6 heures, ils vont célébrer le 60^e anniversaire. Je veux leur souhaiter le bien, et j'espérerais être là, mais avec l'Assemblée qui siège mercredi soir, je ne pourrai pas. Je les félicite pour leur travail de 60 années.

PCI GEOMATICS

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to speak on a successful organization in my riding of Richmond Hill, PCI Geomatics. This company is a world-leading, innovative developer of image-centric software and solutions for geospatial imaging applications.

Last November, this company joined other Ontario-based innovative environmental technology companies in a trade delegation to China led by Premier McGuinty and Minister Chan. The successful mission resulted in \$600 million in contracts. The company signed an agreement with the National Geomatics Center Of China and the Chinese Center for Earth Observation and Digital Earth, focusing on environmental monitoring. Built on the success of last year's trip, PCI Geomatics has further extended its market share in China this year. It has also expanded its market share in Europe.

Ontario has a lot to offer to the world with our knowledge-based green economy and with our government-business partnership. Going green establishes international opportunities and creates jobs. In these challenging times, we need to be more aggressive than ever on the international stage.

I would also like to congratulate PCI Geomatics for their continued success in the international market and for creating world-renowned technology.

JOSEPH BRANT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to inform the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Infrastructure that all of our citizens in Burlington—and those would include Conservatives, Liberals, as well as NDP in my riding—want to know what is happening with the proposal to update and expand our hospital. Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital is a community issue, not a partisan issue. I want to reinforce to both ministers the importance for us to work together on this community issue.

Yet another international epidemic, the swine flu, has reared its ugly head. I want to stress the importance of ensuring that all of our hospitals throughout Ontario have the ability to manage and contain communicable diseases.

Part of the capital build funding put forward by Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital is to ensure that they have state-of-the-art infectious disease control in their facility. One of the reasons cited in the Sault Ste. Marie hospital's coroner's report following their C. difficile outbreak was their aging infrastructure.

With the potential for yet another outbreak on the horizon, the citizens of Burlington deserve to be reassured that we will have a shovel in the ground in the near future. I am willing to work with this government on this critical issue. However, I also wish to serve notice that should another epidemic take place while we are challenged with aging infrastructure and outdated infection controls, your government will know that you had a

hand in the suffering of those victims. It is my hope we work together.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak on what the Ontario budget of 2009 means to Ontarians. This budget represents a commitment by the McGuinty government to make significant investments to help all sectors of the Ontario economy weather the economic storm and get the much-needed stimulus money into the economy. This will make our economy much more competitive.

The government has embarked on a bold measure to strengthen Ontario's economy by introducing tax reforms that will take effect on July 1, 2010. An efficient single tax system will reduce the cost to business. Reduced costs to businesses translate into benefits to consumers as reflected in lower prices as the inputs for businesses are not subject to provincial sales tax. The successes of such reform measures speak for themselves, as they have already been implemented in four Canadian provinces and about 130 countries around the world.

Mindful of some price increases, the McGuinty government has exempted items such as diapers, children's clothing, infant car seats and books. In addition, families with an income of less than \$160,000 will receive \$1,000. Those who earn \$80,000 or less will receive \$300. Some 93% of all Ontarians will benefit from permanent tax cuts. This budget includes \$10.6 billion over the next three years in tax cuts for Ontarians, including those targeted to seniors.

Here are some other benefits: an increase in the senior homeowners' property tax grant from \$250 to \$500 a year; a new refundable property tax credit for low- and middle-income earners; increased investment in health care and hospitals—\$13.2 billion more will be invested than before; a reduction in emergency room waiting times with a comprehensive \$360-million strategy.

In my riding of Scarborough Southwest, we are excited by the investment in infrastructure development that will see a revitalized and expanded transit system at Kennedy subway station connecting it to Pearson airport via Eglinton Avenue, as well as a brand new RT, rapid transit, system that will be built in an upcoming—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1310

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm rising today to ask the government to reconsider the latest tax grab, the Dalton sales tax. This will hit people across the province with increases on items they use every day. Just look at the impact on farmers. In addition to paying 8% more on hundreds of items they need for their families, they are losing their point-of-sale exemption. This means that even on the items that are rebated, they will pay more

because they have to borrow the money until the government rebates it.

Then on Thursday, farmers got another hit. OMAFRA sent out information explaining that even farmland is going to be part of the tax grab. That means that farmland in Ontario will have a 13% sales tax. Imagine the young farmer who is just starting out, and doesn't even have a GST number yet, now having to pay 13% more to purchase farmland. Imagine the young people who have saved and borrowed everything they could to buy their dream farm, and now find that Dalton is going to charge them thousands upon thousands more. If you are selling your farm to your neighbour, he will be hit with the 13% Dalton sales tax whether he farms it or not.

At \$10,000 an acre, this will add an \$80,000 cost to a 100-acre farm. How can anyone believe this government supports new and young farmers when they add to the start-up cost like this?

I ask this government to do the right thing for farmers, seniors and families, and scrap the Dalton sales tax.

DAVID SACKETT

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On March 31, it was announced that McMaster researcher and professor emeritus—and Hamiltonian—Dr. David Sackett will receive the Gairdner Wightman Award. This prestigious international award will be given to Dr. Sackett in recognition of his leadership in the fields of clinical epidemiology and evidence-based medicine.

The only Canadian-based researcher to receive this prize in 2009, Dr. Sackett joins a very influential group of international medical researchers. In fact, one in four recipients of this award has won the Nobel Prize.

For Hamilton, Dr. Sackett's award is of great significance. It is an example of the importance that medical research holds within our city, and the international recognition it has brought to McMaster, Hamilton and Hamiltonians.

Ultimately, Hamilton's successes are Ontario's successes. Hamilton's place as an international centre for medical research attracts investment and world-renowned scholars such as Dr. Sackett to our province.

People all over the world are better off for the work of Dr. Sackett, and we in Hamilton are very fortunate to have him at McMaster.

I'd like to thank Dr. Sackett for all of his great work and for coming to Hamilton.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I rise today to mark the 94th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. April 24, 1915, was the start of a planned and systematic campaign to eradicate the Armenian people by the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire, the last century's first case of ethnic cleansing. One and a half million Armenian men, women and children were brutally killed.

Some of the orphaned survivors of these massacres were settled on a farm in Georgetown, Ontario, in 1923 by the Armenian relief association with funds raised from ordinary Ontarians. These Georgetown Boys, as they became known, were pioneers of the thriving Ontario Armenian community, and their descendants continue to make positive contribution to Ontario's culture and economy.

In 1980, this Legislature, along with the National Assembly in Quebec and the British Columbia Legislature, recognized this tragic event. The House of Commons, the Senate of Canada and the government of Canada have all recognized this genocide as well.

Yesterday, many of our colleagues from this Legislature attended a commemoration of the first genocide of the last century at the Armenian Community Centre in Toronto. I urge you, and all of us, to commemorate this event with the Armenian community of Toronto.

I commend members from all sides of the House, past and present, for their leadership on this matter, and in particular, the member from Don Valley East, David Caplan; the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, Gerry Phillips; and the member from Scarborough Centre, Brad Duguid, who have been long-time advocates for this important issue.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I am proud and honoured to rise today in support of MS Awareness Month and the MS carnation campaign.

I thank all members who have shown their dedication here today to people affected by MS by wearing a carnation.

Today, volunteers from the MS society are at Queen's Park, meeting with MPPs from each political party to raise awareness of MS and the society.

It is known that women are diagnosed with MS three times more often as men. Many Canadians living with MS—multiple sclerosis—are mothers, and many others are adults and children who are affected by this disease. That's why, every year, the MS carnation campaign takes place over Mother's Day weekend.

For over 60 years, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada has provided hope and help for people with MS across Canada through extensive national research. I had the pleasure of co-chairing the very successful Ajax-Pickering MS walk this past week with my federal counterpart, Mark Holland, and we all join the MS society in making every day better for people living with MS and in working to end MS.

REPORT, OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the Ombudsman of Ontario's report entitled *Pirating Our Property: Investigation into the City of Oshawa's Apparent Failure to Co-operate*.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Dickson and Mrs. Mitchell exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Dickson assumes ballot item 10 and Mrs. Mitchell assumes ballot item 13; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 10, 12, 13 and 15.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

POLICE SERVICES

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I rise today, and it is my great pleasure, to pay tribute to two of my ministry's key partners in the critical job of keeping Ontarians safe. Today is Queen's Park Day for both the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

Permit me to inform the House that I just left a meeting with the incoming OACP president, Chief Dan Parkinson; outgoing OACP President Ian Davidson; Deputy OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis; and all the other chiefs and policing partners who are at this meeting. I will be going back to that meeting right after the statements and responses.

I would also like to recognize at this time the OAPSB president, Mary Smiley, who for 12 years has distinguished herself in her incredible individual contribution to the people of Ontario. We are proud to be hosting these organizations jointly for Queen's Park Day and I am proud to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Today, we recognize them for the important leadership role they play and thank them for their significant contributions to law enforcement in Ontario. Ontario is a safe place to live, due in large part to the work of the police chiefs and their partners, the police services boards. I want to thank them on behalf of the people of Ontario for the commitment they bring to the job.

Queen's Park days are a chance for legislators to engage with key partners in constructive dialogue, and it's through days like this one that we continue to build on partnerships that have proven to be strong and pro-

ductive over many, many years and many, many governments.

Both of these organizations are concerned about crime and the safety of Ontarians. So, too, is the McGuinty government. We are proud of the many initiatives that we have undertaken to advance that agenda and of the level of collaboration with these organizations that has helped accomplish our joint objectives.

The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police have welcomed the government's efforts to help them hire more police officers to keep our communities safe. Through our Safer Communities—1,000 Officers program, an additional 1,000 police officers have been working in Ontario communities since 2003. We have committed more than \$37 million per year in permanent funding to this particular program. Moreover, we have made funding permanent for a previous program for additional officers that was due to expire after five years. Together, both programs have delivered over 2,000 new police officers, with a total provincial funding commitment of \$68 million per year—and that's in perpetuity. In doing this, we have responded to the need expressed by our police partners.

1320

Recently, Premier McGuinty announced Ontario's participation in the federal government's police officers recruitment program. Ontario's share of that fund, \$156 million over five years, is woefully inadequate, and I think every member in the House agrees with this. The program announced by the federal government is a limited, five-year program that falls far short of the mark. However, we will make the best use of these limited funds while we continue, as a House, to lobby the federal government to provide full funding for Ontario's fair share of the number of officers promised.

We're also asking the federal government to make the funding permanent so that police services boards and their communities can continue to have the services of these additional officers after five years.

I welcome Queen's Park day as an opportunity for my colleagues in the Legislature to participate in important dialogue regarding issues such as this, and I appreciate this occasion to tell these valuable partners how much we value their work and to thank them for all they do to keep us safe. Our government will continue to work to ensure that our partnership with the OACP and the OAPSB continues to thrive.

NATIONAL VICTIMS OF CRIME
AWARENESS WEEK
SEMAINE NATIONALE DE
SENSIBILISATION AUX VICTIMES
D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It is a privilege for me to rise in the House today to mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, which runs from April 26 to

May 2 of this year. Throughout this week we honour the strength of victims who overcome great hardship to make important contributions to our province, and we restate our determination to do whatever we can and whatever we must to strengthen justice and reduce the harm in the first place.

Dans tout l'Ontario, des milliers de bénévoles et professionnels offrent leurs connaissances, leur soutien et leurs conseils aux victimes. Ils font preuve de compassion et de respect dans les services qu'ils rendent aux victimes quand elles en ont le plus besoin, que ce soit tout de suite après la perpétration de l'acte criminel, pendant les procédures judiciaires ou alors qu'elles s'efforcent de tourner la page.

Across Ontario, thousands of volunteers and professionals offer their knowledge, support, and advice to victims. They demonstrate compassion and respect, helping victims when help is needed most, whether in the immediate aftermath of crime, during the criminal justice process, or as they work to rebuild their lives. Many strive to raise the profile of victims' issues that so others may benefit from their efforts. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

One of the ways we express our thanks for the efforts of victims, and the volunteers and service providers who support them, is through our Victim Services Awards of Distinction. Later this week we'll be calling for nominations for the third annual Victim Services Awards. These awards honour the dedication and creativity of professionals and volunteers who serve victims. They also celebrate victims who have courageously forged a better future for themselves, their families and their communities. The awards also help local victims' services agencies share best practices and learn from the successes of exemplary individuals and organizations. Anyone in Ontario can nominate any person or group in the province. The package of information about the program is being distributed today and I encourage every member of this House to participate.

We support victims of crime with the assistance they need from the moment of victimization, throughout court and related proceedings, and help them find a more hopeful future. We have continued to invest in the delivery of important programs that provide immediate relief to thousands of victims of crime across Ontario.

Often, victims tell us that in times of trauma, it is difficult to know where to turn for the specialized help they need. In order to provide easy-to-access information on local services, Ontario's Victim Services Secretariat has developed a new online directory of community victim services across the province. Information about community resources for victims is also available, in most languages spoken in Ontario, to anyone who calls our toll-free victim support line.

In the immediate aftermath of crime, volunteers from the government-funded victim crisis assistance and referral service provide on-site, immediate short-term help and support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They provide exemplary support to victims under difficult cir-

cumstances. Last year, we increased the program's funding by \$1.8 million, bringing the total to \$9.4 million every year.

In 2007, we also introduced the victim quick response program. It continues to grow and helps more victims immediately after the incidents have occurred. Through this program, victims can receive emergency funding to help with child care, home repairs, housing and meals, transportation costs and professional trauma counselling. In cases of homicide, the program will help to alleviate the burden on grieving family members by covering some of their funeral costs.

Ontario's victim/witness assistance program, a front-line victim service fully staffed by government employees, offers support to people who are victims of the most serious crimes once charges are laid. It has been operating for more than 20 years. It continues to be rated by those it serves as highly successful, due in part to its track record of evolving and adapting to victims' needs. Last year, we increased funding to the victim/witness assistance program by \$2.9 million, bringing its total budget to \$19 million. Now we can connect with victims within 24 hours of an ask for an offer of assistance.

Our highly trained victim services staff work together with crown prosecutors, the police and others to help us serve and reach our goal of breaking the cycle of violence through our domestic violence court program. We are a national leader in this program, which delivers support to victims in specialized processes for domestic violence court cases in all 54 court jurisdictions.

Over the past year, we've expanded other services that are essential to helping victims of domestic violence rebuild their lives. For example, funding was doubled from fiscal 2007-08 to this year, to \$8 million, for the supervised access program, which facilitates child custody exchanges and visits where there is a safety concern. This program makes sure that court-ordered custody access visits can be done with the necessary level of safety.

We've also increased funding to SupportLink by 40%. SupportLink is a partnership among the Ministry of the Attorney General, Rogers Wireless and Ericsson Canada. It provides safety planning for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. It also offers cell-phones that are pre-programmed to call 911 to help keep victims safe.

Through our child victim/witness program, we help to ensure support and services available to child victims and witnesses during their criminal court process, often to children who've witnessed domestic violence. Our government expanded this program last year and now provides \$1.3 million for eight of these specialized services across the province.

We work every day to help keep people from being victims of crime, but when they are, our province needs programs and services that hold offenders accountable for their actions. That's why we also increased funding for the partner assault response program last year. These counselling and education programs, known as PARs, are

directed primarily at offenders and are designed to help them learn better, non-abusive ways of relating to their partners.

We want to ensure that Ontarians have access to justice and to the supports and services that meet their needs and are culturally appropriate. We're all aware of the tragic overrepresentation of aboriginal people in our justice system. As part of Ontario's first aboriginal justice strategy, we're working to reduce the number of aboriginal justice victims and offenders in our system. The aboriginal community justice program is helping improve and increasing access to justice for aboriginal offenders by ensuring that proper cultural and healing supports are available to help reduce the risk of reoffending.

To assist aboriginal victims, we're helping communities develop practical projects that address the needs and priorities of victims, as defined by aboriginal communities, through a new grants program developed in our ministry and launched in August 2008. This program is a step toward improving services for aboriginal victims and communities through training, the development of best practices and by building community resources to meet their needs. We're working to build stronger relationships between government and among aboriginal communities—First Nations, Inuit, Metis communities and organizations—that will continue to grow long after the program has ended.

1330

Our commitment is clear. This year, we'll spend \$132 million on vital supports and services to better respond to victims' trauma and to help them rebuild their lives. This is in addition to the \$657 million our government has already invested to make our province a leader in victims' services, more than twice what any past government has contributed to victims' well-being. We'll continue to work at improving services for victims of crime, whether through continued funding, tried-and-true programs such as the victim/witness program, or finding new and innovative ways to help communities across Ontario share new skills and best practices.

As Ontarians, we all have a responsibility to learn about the issues that affect victims of crime and to help build stronger communities that offer the help and support they need.

I know that all members of the House will continue to support victims of crime and will honour the contributions they and those who work with them make across our province.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: Standing order 35(c) is very, very clear. It's not optional. It's mandatory. We in this House need your assistance to ensure that ministers comply with standing order 35(c). If the page would please come and get the copy of the ministerial statement that was provided to opposition critics and leaders and leave that with the Clerk, please, and the Speaker would check that against the comments

made by the Minister of Correctional Services this afternoon, you'll find that there was failure to comply with 35(c). If you don't enforce it, rogue ministers, scofflaw ministers, are just going to run wild over the rules. We call upon you to ensure that our rights are protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate that the member opposite has raised this concern with us directly, prior to making this intervention, and we will be taking it up with the ministers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from Welland and the government House leader for rising on the point of order.

I will say this to the government and to the ministers: We do need to ensure fairness to the members of the opposition who are going to be responding to those statements by ministries. Ministers should not ad lib any substantive changes to that written statement.

As Speaker—and I say this to the honourable members of the opposition—I do not receive copies of the written statements. I must, therefore, stand on the goodwill of the ministers as well. I would ask that we receive the co-operation of the ministers in sticking exactly to—as the Attorney General just did, I should note; it sounded like it, anyway—that prepared text, because that forms the basis for the response from the opposition. Thanks.

Responses?

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'll be responding today to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and also to the Attorney General.

First of all I'd like to say, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, that I'm very pleased to welcome the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards here to Queen's Park. So far today, I've already had two meetings. I met with Deputy Commissioner Chris Lewis first thing this morning. I had lunch and met with Chief Paul Hamelin from the Midland Police Service. At 2 o'clock I'll be meeting with our leader, Mr. Runciman, and we'll be talking to around 30 chiefs of police about different issues they face within their jobs and what they're here lobbying for.

I'd also like to say that our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, has always been a close friend of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and we like to listen carefully to their concerns and to the issues they face—and I know there are many of them today. I've got some briefing notes that our party has looked at—things like suspension without pay for officers who are involved in some serious crimes themselves. Crime prevention is a very strong priority for our party. In the last House, we had the Time for Action plan. We thought it was a very, very positive document that, as we move forward in the history of the province—we paid special attention to more serious crimes.

Funding for policing is always a big issue. There's no question that now, as we get into an economic downturn—we have the same problems that face social assistance and social services; the same thing applies—usually crime increases. The police services boards and the chiefs of police who are the administrators of those boards have a lot more responsibility, as crime increases, so they will be looking for that.

Of course we have some issues around special constables that the chiefs want to discuss as well, and they've got some good points. These are all points we can move forward with as a caucus.

I was about to thank the federal government for giving the Ontario government \$156 million for more police services, and was disappointed when the minister stood up and actually criticized the federal government for giving this money. He wanted more. I have to remind the minister, just in case he isn't aware of it, that policing is a provincial responsibility. This was a one-time gift from the federal government, and I think they should be appreciative. This government should be very appreciative of the billions and billions of extra dollars they have received from the federal Conservative government—Stephen Harper's boys—up in Ottawa. They've done an excellent job.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I didn't heckle them when they stood up—of course, the minister is over there. They can't take it; they can't take the truth. The fact of the matter is that the federal government has been very, very good to the Ontario government. Billions of dollars more have flowed to this government, and do you know what? You've wasted it just the same as you continue to waste no matter how much money you've got. I also want to stress the fact that policing in the province of Ontario is a provincial responsibility. That's the reality. So crying about federal money is really a cop-out, as far as I'm concerned—excuse the pun.

NATIONAL VICTIMS OF CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to take a minute to respond to the Attorney General and applaud the fact that April 26 to May 2 is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. I'm very proud that it was a Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of Mike Harris and the Attorney General at the time, Charles Harnick, that created the Victims' Bill of Rights, and we moved forward with that. Do you know what? We've been proud of that and we've been proud of our record with this.

We know, as we move forward, that there are still very, very serious crimes occurring out there. With the number of police available today, we know that the number of crimes is actually down but that serious crimes are up. I looked across the TV screen the other day and saw where one of the people charged with the shooting of Jane Creba—the Boxing Day murder—will be eligible

for parole in seven years. I think that type of thing is shameful in a province like Ontario.

I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on this today and thank everyone. I hope everyone takes the fact that this is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, and remembers those who have been victims of crime in this province.

POLICE SERVICES NATIONAL VICTIMS OF CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased, on behalf of New Democrats, to respond to both the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Attorney General. We New Democrats are pleased to be talking with chiefs of police, along with members of police services boards, here at Queen's Park today. We understand some of the issues they propose to raise.

One of the matters they've brought to our attention, and will be bringing to our attention this afternoon, is that the most recent crime statistics, those for 2007, would give people the impression—and there's no reason to disbelieve them—that there has been a reduction in crime, that there has been a decline in most serious offences; that is, violent crimes. Well, that's little comfort to the person who gets shot on Yonge Street by a wayward bullet. Crime stats are of little comfort to the person who is the victim of a violent sexual attack.

The observation that there has been a decline in break-ins and motor vehicle theft is of little comfort to the senior citizen who comes home, after going to Bingo or a church banquet, and finds her house ransacked and is left with personal fear that will accompany her to her very deathbed. It's incredible how serious an intrusion that is on a person's life—a break and enter in and of itself—with the loss of intimate family mementos that can never be replaced.

The observation that there's been a decline in the youth crime rate is of little comfort to kids who are the victims of bullying, to women who get mugged and have their purses snatched from them or to people who find themselves victims of vandalism.

1340

But it's interesting that in their submission to MPPs this year, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police—these are not bleeding-heart Liberals. These are tough cops, very experienced. In their submissions they note that Canada spends \$15 billion in reactive approaches to crime—\$10 billion of that is in policing itself—but spends less than \$100 million in crime prevention initiatives. These are chiefs of police talking, not bleeding-heart social workers, not tree-hugger types.

The chiefs of police suggested a mere 10% increase in that \$100 million spent on crime prevention would have a dramatic impact on crime prevention and would see a serious decrease in crime in high-risk communities; they suggest by as much as 50%. These are simple propositions like youth programs, job training programs, pro-

grams designed to retain kids, keep kids in high school until graduation.

New Democrats have been very aware of the critical failure of a succession of governments to respond to victims' rights. My colleague has the audacity to make reference to a Conservative Victims' Bill of Rights that the courts found in short order to be not worth the paper that it's written on, that it created no rights whatsoever.

And I tell you, nothing is more painful than to be victimized by a criminal and then revictimized by a court process that fails victims, by a court process that relies overly much on plea bargaining because of the heavy dockets that understaffed courtrooms have to deal with.

Nothing is more frustrating, I'm sure, for police officers who work hard, sometimes in dangerous circumstances, doing investigations, attending to the minute detail that the Charter of Rights and current law requires of them, than to find charges dropped because of a lack of courtroom access; to find charges dropped because Askov still looms like a cloud over almost every prosecution that's taking place here in the province of Ontario; and/or to see charges outright dismissed because the court had no choice but to stay charges because of the delays that are imposed by an overburdened system that's under-resourced and understaffed.

If you want to talk about crisis in policing, go up to Gilles Bisson's riding of Timmins-James Bay. Go to places like Peawanuck and Attawapiskat and look at how communities like those have to deal with crime and crime prevention—police officers who literally have snowmobiles without tracks on them. Of course, I don't have to underscore the tragedy at Kashechewan at that fatal fire, which is the subject matter of an inquest, that fatal fire that left police officers scrambling to find the keys to the cells while inmates were burning to death.

New Democrats are pleased to join our cops in Ontario in calling for them to have the tools and the resources they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. We're also pleased now to join them in calling for new investment in crime prevention programs, particularly focused on young people, so that we can, as chiefs of police indicate, reduce crime in those high-risk communities by 50%. That's money well spent.

JAMES SNOW

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late James Snow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's an honour to stand in the House today and pay tribute to Jim Snow. I'm also pleased to say that his wife, Barb, his son James, his daughter Julie and his granddaughter Amy are with us today as well.

Jim was a friend but also a mentor to me and many of the people who sit around me in this House. In his incredible life, Jim gave so much to his community, to Ontario, to Canada, to his party and to his family.

Jim was not a small man, neither in stature nor in personality. It's no wonder he needed such a large frame to house his giant heart and to carry the weight of his immense sense of responsibility, for Jim tackled life with such purpose and compassion. He accomplished so much in one lifetime, he really had the strength of many men.

It was men like Jim who helped create the current nostalgia for the past that many Ontarians hold. We often look back with fond memories to those days when hard work, ambition, integrity and individual responsibility were the cornerstones of our prosperity. Of course, it is not that black and white. Critical study reveals that our past had its fair share of injustice, of greed, of poverty and of all the warts that we would rather not see. But the collective myths and the stereotypes of history exist for a reason. They exist not only because we want to forget the negatives, but because we want to celebrate the positives. They exist because of men like Jim Snow, who defined achievement, who found that perfect balance between private and public life, who rose to prominence without hurting anyone along the way—except, of course, for his political opponents. To accomplish so much while remaining generous, honest and virtuous—that is the definition of a life well lived. As a farmer, as a businessman, as a politician, a pilot, a philanthropist, a family man, a friend, a neighbour, Jim sought results and got them. I think that his greatest legacy is results for those he served.

As the Minister of Transportation especially, Jim set the bar high. I should point out that the James Snow Parkway, which was named during the period of time when Jim Snow was the Minister of Transportation, is a regional road, and it was named for Jim in honour of his service to Ontario. It was somewhat controversial at the time, people wondering how the Minister of Transportation could have a road named after him and signed as such on the 401.

Jim set the bar high. In nine years he helped build so many of those roads, railways, airports and bridges that were essential for economic success. He even rode his motorcycle all over those highways to make sure they were in good shape. He was really involved in those projects. He wasn't just the figurehead of that very important ministry, the Ministry of Transportation, but he would actually sit down with the designers, the engineers, the planners and all levels of bureaucracy to make sure the projects were perfect. It has been said that Jim was perhaps the last Minister of Transportation to actually run the ministry—although he had a great asset in Howard Gilbert, his deputy minister. In that sense, Jim was so much more than a politician during his time at Queen's Park. He was a true servant of the people of Ontario and an example for all current and future members of this Legislature.

He also serves as an example in the way that he conducted himself in this chamber and in the media. Jim was not one to mince words. He avoided the manipulation and wordplay that is all too common in politics these days. He said what he meant and he meant what he said.

Sometimes his frankness was offensive to those on the receiving end, but he always chose truth over deceit, honesty over expediency. In this regard, we all should take note and strive to do better.

Beyond his day-to-day work as minister, Jim was one of the best representatives this province ever had. He cared so deeply for all of his constituents, despite any political affiliations or critical perspectives. Often the very demanding work of ministers keeps them from their constituencies, but not so with Jim. I was one of those constituents back when I would call his office from time to time needing information, and every time, Jim would call me back personally the same day. All members of the House know how impressive that is. These days we get so many e-mails that we often need a day or two and the help of our many staff to keep up. But even back then, Jim was one of a kind when it came to true democratic representation.

To make up for his time away from the office, he gave out his home phone number so he could stay in touch with the people in his riding. That made his wife, Barb, a de facto volunteer constituency assistant, but I'm sure she didn't mind too much, for Barb, like Jim, is the epitome of selflessness and determination.

Applause.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Like Jim, she cares deeply for her community, and the people of Halton owe her many thanks indeed. It was often said at election time that you had to vote for Jim because you wanted Barb to continue her role in the constituency.

After his long political career, Jim returned to private life and succeeded there as much as he did here. In his final years, he gave back so much to the land that gave him life, including a 2006 donation of \$500,000 to the Milton hospital for a CT scanner, and a gift of his own home and farm to the Salvation Army. These acts of goodness truly reveal the vast generosity and compassion that Jim held in his wonderful heart.

In closing, I would like to speak to Jim's best accomplishments: his family. All of the current and past members of the PC Party who knew Jim got a taste of what family meant to this man. He treated our party like extended family, always ready to host, to give advice and lend a helping hand. To you, his family, I say thank you. Thank you for letting us all, the whole province, share your husband, your father and your grandfather. Thank you for helping shape Jim into the great man he became. Thank you for taking constituency calls late into the night. But, most of all, thank you for supporting him, and in turn supporting us, where we are richer because of him now and forever. Thank you.

1350

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I rise on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party to pay tribute to James Snow and to welcome the members of the Snow family who are here with us today, as we celebrate the contributions of a man who believed in his community.

Although James Snow and New Democrats approached issues from different perspectives, we all hold

in common the many personal sacrifices that have to be made in order to serve the people in our ridings.

It is fitting that his family is here today as we pay tribute to his legacy, as they are owed a debt of gratitude for their willingness to share him with the people of Ontario. For many, the sacrifices made by family often go unnoticed and unreported; however, for those of us who have the privilege of sitting in these benches, we all know too well the value of this foundation and the key role that our loved ones play in our efforts to serve the public to the best of our ability.

To Barbara and the rest of the Snow family, we thank you for the role that you played in building a stronger Ontario, and we are aware that James's successes would have been diminished by the absence of your support.

James Snow's contributions to Halton region include Halton Regional Road 4—later renamed James Snow Parkway in his honour, as mentioned by the member from Halton—and serve as a testament to his belief that the needs of his constituents were his priority as the MPP. He believed in the people and the potential of the communities he had the honour of serving, and demonstrated that in this House and at the cabinet table.

As a lifelong resident of Halton region, James Snow always made the effort to remain accessible to those who sent him to Queen's Park, even meeting with constituents in his home while serving as Ontario's transportation minister.

James Snow's commitment to Halton did not end with retirement from political life. He continued to lead by example, making incredible contributions to local charitable causes.

James Snow led a full life at Queen's Park, but more importantly, he never lost sight of the community and the people he came here to represent. We celebrate his contributions to Halton and to Ontario. Thank you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On behalf of the government, the Liberal Party, I'd like to pay tribute to Jim Snow this afternoon.

I look at the boardroom wall and I see photographs of different ministers—my friend Norm Sterling is on the wall, as well, and he would have looked at the photographs. One of the most imposing, and more than simply the picture itself but of the memories, is the photograph of Jim Snow, who for almost 10 years was the Minister of Transportation. Most of us do not last that long in any specific portfolio. There are various reasons one gets moved from them. Sometimes it's with the help of the electorate and sometimes it's because of other reasons. The very fact that Premier Davis kept Jim Snow on as Minister of Transportation and Communications, as it was known then, is because he was highly effective.

I was impressed, in going back in some of the memories of Jim, to note that he had actually started Snow Construction at the age of 19. Most people are out having a good time when they're 19, and perhaps he was as well, but he had time to set up a construction company and, of course, to run the family farm.

Those of us who served with him—Norm Sterling and I did, and probably Bob Runciman and Tony Ruprecht

did as well—will remember, and I saw a note in here that said he was sometimes vociferous. I would like to correct that: He was always vociferous. He was always prepared to express his views. He was very blunt. There was none of the doublespeak, as the member from Halton said. What he said he meant, and he didn't care what they said when he got outside into the media scrum. Jim Snow said what he thought, and he said that to his colleagues as well.

He was not a fan, it's safe to say, of the Environmental Assessment Act, as it restricted—I must tell the Minister of the Environment—his ability to undertake construction in the province of Ontario. I remember recalling to him the situation with the Burlington Skyway, the James Allan Skyway, as it is called, and he was lamenting how long it was taking to build it because of the environmental assessment process. While he believed in protecting the environment, he was a man of action and wanted to see those works undertaken.

I understand that there were some good parties at the farm. I didn't get any invitations, or if I did I was afraid to go because there were so many Conservatives there, but it was apparently a great time. He extended that hand of warmth and hospitality to all.

The member for Halton was correct in saying that when you had a question for him on a personal basis, he was prepared to get back to you quickly.

We are now insulated, some would say—some would say “served”—by constituency offices. From 1971 to 1975, you wouldn't have seen constituency offices; they were something that came along later. So Barb and the family and others, and Jim, would have to take those calls at home with individual constituent concerns, keeping in mind that he was also a cabinet minister with a very significant portfolio in that day.

He was a very friendly fellow, as we recall, with a booming laugh. He always had a good joke to tell to colleagues, and we enjoyed him very much.

He was re-elected every time. He got elected, I notice, by 164 votes—a landslide—when he started out. But what was important was that no matter how well the government was doing at the polls, Jim Snow was elected with comfortable pluralities in his constituency, and that is a clear indication that people were satisfied with his service.

John Tory, the former leader of the Conservative Party, described him as a man larger than life. John saw him from two points of view. He was a friend, of course, but John, you'll remember, worked—I don't like to use the word “backrooms”—in the backrooms of the government at that time as an assistant to Bill Davis. He would see, on that basis, the kind of influence that Jim Snow had. I suspect that he wouldn't have been as understanding of unelected officials who advise ministers and Premiers as perhaps some of us are today, and I guess that speaks well for him.

Thank you very much for sharing him with us, because it is a matter of sharing a person with the province of Ontario. Jim could have been successful in a thousand different areas; he had that kind of personality and

enthusiasm. He chose to be in the public sector for a significant period of time, approximately 18 years, which meant that the province of Ontario benefited immensely from that.

I was amazed as well: He was a pilot. I've always been amazed by people who are pilots. Now I've heard that he rode a motorcycle as well. He was a man who was fearless in that regard, and that is something that we should applaud enthusiastically.

The last thing I want to mention is his contribution to community. I was impressed, as others were, by the contribution of some half a million dollars to the Milton District Hospital for the CT scanner. As we know, hospital equipment is not something that is publicly financed. It is something for which fundraising takes place. When someone makes a donation of half a million dollars toward such an instrument, it's a catalyst for others to contribute as well. And of course, providing the farm to the Salvation Army was yet another good example of his generosity to the people of the community.

Lastly, I want to compliment him for being a member of the United Church of Canada, something he and I share. I know that he had dedication to his church as well.

So, while we have lost him—he died at the age of 79, which today is too early; for Jim, it would be too early at any time—the one thing that can't be taken away from those of us in this House and his community is the many memories that he left with us, and the accomplishments that were part of the progress of the province of Ontario.

So to the family, we express our condolences but also our thanks to you for sharing with us a man who was larger than life: our friend, Jim Snow.

Applause.

1400

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all member and guests to join me as we mark a moment of silence in tribute to former member James Snow.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I thank the honourable members for their participation in the tribute.

To Mrs. Snow and to your family, I'll ensure that copies of the Hansard are provided to you as a permanent record of today's tribute to your husband and your father and your grandfather.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts; and

“Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I'm pleased to sign this and pass it to my page, Cameron T.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great number of my constituents, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, has publicly stated that she 'absolutely' wants to help the beginning and new entrants to agriculture; and

"Whereas beginning and expanding farmers are going to be important in the coming decade, as a record number of producers are expected to leave the industry; and

"Whereas the safety net payments—i.e., Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture payments (OCHHP)—are based on historical averages, and many beginning and expanding farmers were not in business or just starting up in the period so named and thus do not have reflective historic allowable net sales; and

"Whereas beginning and expanding producers are likely at the greatest risk of being financially disadvantaged by poor market conditions and are being forced to exit agriculture because there is not a satisfactory safety net program or payment that meets their needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately adjust the safety net payments made via the OCHHP to include beginning and expanding farmers, and make a relief payment to the beginning and expanding farmers who have been missed or received seriously disproportionate payments, thereby preventing beginning farmers from exiting the agriculture sector."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my signature.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax ... will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I'm proud to affix my signature to it and give it to page Kenzie.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from Sister Ditma in support of the caregivers.

"Whereas a number of ... caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; and

"Whereas a great number of ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment ... Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support Sister Ditma and the caregivers, and I affix my name to this petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, and as a reminder to the member from Scarborough Southwest, who had a member's statement this morning, this is in response to that. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the proposed harmonization of the Ontario retail sales tax (RST) with the federal GST has the potential to increase costs to many small businesses and their customers; and

"Whereas these added costs would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times; and

"Organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders' Association have estimated that harmonization would add \$15,000 in taxes to the price of a new Ontario home.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of GST and RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

BRANTFORD SENIORS RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr. Dave Levac: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Brantford Seniors Resource Centre Inc. has had over 3,700 contacts in its first 11 months of operation; and

"Whereas it has distributed over 7,000 pieces of agency and government information; and

"Whereas this volunteer organization has helped seniors from Hamilton, Woodstock, Cathcart, Simcoe, Brantford, Brant county and Six Nations fill out government forms;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to fund this valuable community asset in the amount of \$25,000."

I sign this petition with my support.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the new McGuinty sales tax and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is planning to merge the 8% provincial sales tax and the 5% federal sales tax; and

"Whereas the new 13% harmonized sales tax will be applied to products not previously subject to provincial sales tax such as gasoline, home heating fuels, home renovations, haircuts, hamburgers, television service, Internet service, telephone and cell services, taxi fees, bus, train and airplane tickets, and dry cleaning services; and

"Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by the harmonized sales tax, as will seniors and families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government should remove this harmonized sales tax from its 2009-10 budget."

I give this to Michael.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from the good people in the riding of Davenport, Jack Fava and the local police unit.

"Stop unlawful firearms in vehicles.

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers" and "military personnel ... are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of" illegal guns "are transported, smuggled and found in" cars; and

"Whereas impounding" cars "and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing" illegal guns "in motor vehicles would" help "the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of" gun crimes "in our communities."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I have another petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000" people; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take the necessary actions to fund" all "hospitals equally" and equitably. "And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East LHIN address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition on behalf of my constituents.

1410

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from hundreds of people in Mississauga and Brampton in support of protecting vulnerable caregivers.

"Whereas a number of ... caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable" caregivers; and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; and

"Whereas a great number of ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment ... Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support the good people in Mississauga and the protection of caregivers and I affix to my name to this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, another petition from the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition on behalf of the economy of Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the Green Energy and Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in

Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with this petition, give a copy to Kenzie and affix my signature to it.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: Another petition. These are all different, they're all unique, and they're all from constituents in the riding of Durham. This one reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail' legislation) which permitted GM to underfund the pension benefits guarantee fund; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo salaried pension organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the pension benefits guarantee fund; and

"That, in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made to ensure that GM fully funds pension plan 0340950 and continues to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with its retirement commitments; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect the pensions of GM retirees."

I'm pleased to sign and support this in support of my constituents.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a much more appropriate, short petition here, collected by Valentina Karapici, who's an incredible volunteer in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; "and

"Whereas a great number of" caregivers "perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support Valentina Karapici and the caregivers and I affix my name to this fine petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOXICS REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES TOXIQUES

Mr. Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts /
Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à promouvoir une réduction de l'utilisation et de la création de substances toxiques et à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm pleased to begin second reading debate on the government's proposed Toxics Reduction Act. But before doing that, we might just review some of the actions that this government has taken over the last five years since we came into government in 2003. Since that time, we have passed a Clean Water Act and a Source Water Protection Act. You may recall that that act is an effort by the 19 or so source water protection committees around this province to clearly plan and identify the sources of fresh water, particularly for municipal drinking water systems. Whether that water is groundwater, surface water, or river, stream or lake water, they're doing excellent work to make sure that the sources of our water are protected.

We've also, since that time, hired 30 more drinking water inspectors to make sure that the water we drink is as clean as it can possibly be and be safe for all of us who drink it from time to time.

We also passed a Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act. That act virtually bans diversions from the Great Lakes and brings in water charges for industry for the first time. As time goes along, we will be improving that act as well.

You may recall that just last year we passed the Lake Simcoe Protection Act to make sure that Lake Simcoe, which is a body of water just north of the GTA that's under stress right now, will be there for many, many generations to come as a place where people can have recreational activities take place, where the deep water

fishery will once again flourish as it has in days gone by. We're right now in the process of developing a plan to protect Lake Simcoe and the streams and rivers that flow into Lake Simcoe, some 23 of them, so that we can protect that in the future. That's the kind of work that we're doing right now, and that plan will come out in the near future.

We also, in the area of environmental legislation, passed a bill which is called the "You spill, you pay" legislation, which is one of the toughest anti-pollution laws in North America. That wasn't the case before. That's all happened in the last five years.

Just a couple of weeks ago—as a matter of fact, on April 22; I guess it was last week—the law banning the cosmetic use of pesticides came into effect, and not only the use of pesticides on our lawns and yards and playgrounds and parks but also the sale of pesticide material in the province of Ontario that is strictly used for cosmetic purposes. I can tell you that the overwhelming majority of Ontarians support this, and certainly from the e-mails, letters and the comments that I've received, this has been extremely well received. It's been supported by organizations such as the nurses' association and the medical association in the province of Ontario. It's been supported by environmental groups, by the David Suzuki Foundation, Environmental Defence—I could go on and on. Some people have worked tirelessly on bringing that province-wide law into existence for over 20 years.

1420

Just recently, as well, we greatly increased our number of waste diversion programs. You may recall a while ago that we brought forward the new household hazardous waste program, whereby the number of collection places and depots around this province have been substantially increased—and we want to increase that fivefold in the years to come to the number that are out there right now—to make sure that all those hazardous toxic materials that we have within our households, one way or another, are no longer disposed of either in our water streams, in being flushed down the toilet, as it were, or no longer end up in our landfill sites. That material should be properly disposed of, it should be put into new substances and new materials, but it should not end up in either landfill sites or in our water streams.

Just a little while ago we came out with a new program with respect to electronic and electrical waste and the proper disposal of that. There are some companies that are doing some excellent work in the province of Ontario, where they literally take old computers, televisions, monitors, keyboards etc. and take them apart piece by piece so that every bit of the substances that create these different instruments can once again be utilized in new product. Of course, the hazardous materials that are contained—the lead and mercury in each one of these electronic devices—will also no longer be deposited in our landfill sites.

Also, we will be coming out very soon with a tire recycling program. Many people know that there are over six million to seven million tires across the province of

Ontario—which have been dumped illegally, in a lot of cases, that are on properties, particularly in rural areas, and some on aboriginal lands—that are basically a health hazard to individuals. Our new tire recycling program will make sure that not only the 12 million or so tires that are being replaced on an annual basis in the province of Ontario are dealt with in an environmentally sound recycling fashion, but also the stockpiles of the old tires will be dealt with as well.

All of these various laws, when it comes to waste diversion activities, are based on the principle of extended producer responsibility. That basically means that ultimately those who produce the material should be responsible for its proper disposition, in one way or another, in new product, once the life cycle of that product is over and done with.

The question of air quality: Since we took over as government in 2003, we have put into place 59 new and updated air quality standards. We also tabled last year the first annual climate change report, which basically shows that we're on track.

Of course, the defining issue, I suppose—not only within the environmental community, but the defining issue of our time—is the one relating to climate change, where we as a society, not only here in Ontario, in North America and in Canada but throughout the world, simply have to lower those greenhouse gas emissions. Because the science is in: If we don't do something about it, the world that we know today simply will not be here for our children and grandchildren to enjoy 50 or 60 years from now.

We've heard about the disappearance of the ice caps, both in the north and the south pole. It may very well happen that whole islands may disappear in the South Pacific. So we're working on the climate change plan by building more transit in the province of Ontario; over \$50 billion will be spent on more transit to take cars off the road. We're also working with, for example, the province of Quebec to come up with a cap-and-trade system, and we're working very closely with the Western Climate Initiative as well. It's all intended for only one purpose, and that is to reduce those greenhouse gas emissions. So a lot of progress has been made, but as you and I know, a lot more work needs to be done if we want to make sure that our environment is not only enhanced but is better than it is today.

It's with that in mind that we are adding another piece to the puzzle, as it were, to deal with the environmental situation that confronts us on a day-to-day basis with the second reading debate that's starting today with respect to our government's proposed Toxics Reduction Act. This is very important legislation because it would provide numerous environmental and health benefits to our province and, of course, most importantly, to the citizens of this province. At its very core, it would reduce toxic substances in our air, water, land and consumer products. It would help protect Ontarians from potentially harmful effects of toxics to their health, whether in their home, their workplace or their community, and it would result

in making our environment cleaner, safer and healthier, a goal which I'm sure all of us in this Legislature share.

But it would do more than that. If this bill is passed, it would also stir innovation, create jobs and investment, and further boost Ontario's green economy, which offers such great potential for our future.

There are more than 23,000 chemicals in commercial use in Canada—23,000 different chemicals. More than 100 new chemicals are introduced to the Canadian marketplace each and every year. Unfortunately, Ontario is currently responsible for the highest releases of toxics in the country, and it's among the highest-releasing jurisdictions in North America. That simply isn't good enough. It isn't good enough for our children, it isn't good enough for us, and it isn't good enough for this government. That's why, in the last election, Premier Dalton McGuinty promised the people of Ontario that we would introduce toxics reduction legislation.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm sure the member from Durham would totally agree with this bill and that he will support it once second reading debate is over and done with. The strategy is all about better protecting human health and the environment while supporting the transformation of businesses in Ontario to a new green economy.

I want to once again recognize Ontario's Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel, which provided with us with such valuable advice in this area over the past year. Its co-chairs, Dr. Miriam Diamond and Professor Lynda Collins, both stated that the proposed legislation, if passed, will mark a major step forward for health protection, the environment, and as a move toward a greener economy. Professor Collins calls it "21st century environmental regulation" that is an absolute must. Dr. Diamond states that it "responds to the people's concerns about toxics by incorporating science and policy advances into a well-planned and broad framework intended to reduce toxic emissions."

We've heard many other positive reactions to this bill as well. Wendy Fucile, the president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, said the following: "Nurses know the harm caused by toxic pollution and that's why we applaud the significant steps proposed by the McGuinty government to reduce dangerous levels of exposure." Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence, states, "The detox of Ontario has begun. This act will reduce our exposure to harmful chemicals and provide us with the tools to know what pollutants are being emitted in our communities." Andy King of the United Steelworkers Union said, "We ... support the legislation because it will help protect manufacturing jobs in this province and attract more. Companies need to reduce their chemical use to be more competitive in international markets and to meet increasing international standards." As he so aptly put it, it will create more jobs.

1430

Further, there's overwhelming support from Ontarians who want us to act now to reduce toxics in their envi-

ronment, so that they can enjoy a healthy quality of life. Recent findings of a poll by the Canadian Cancer Society indicate that the majority of Ontarians—close to 96%—support our commitment to put a toxic reduction plan in place. I don't know of too many other polls that support something to the tune of 96%.

Let me just remind the House of the bill's principal measures. If passed, this legislation would focus industries on reducing their use of toxic chemicals at the front end of the industrial process. It would, in effect, augment the traditional approach of managing toxics at the end of the process. Currently, most of our environmental legislation is about finding out what comes out the end of an industrial process—what comes out of the pipe, as it were. We would like to turn it around and find out how we can reduce the use of toxic chemicals going into the front end of the industrial process.

It would build on Ontario's existing legislation and practices that focus on reducing emissions—I talked earlier about the 57 increased air quality standards we have introduced within the last two to three years—as well as the proper handling and disposal of hazardous waste.

Regulated facilities would be required to account for the toxics they are using—they have to account for the toxics they are using—plan for their reduction and make a summary of that plan available to the public. Our government firmly believes that Ontarians have the right to know about toxics in their communities. The right to know by the public at large is part of the act. They have the right to know about toxics in their communities so that they can make informed choices for themselves and their families. Public reporting by facilities, as set out in regulation, would enable this to happen.

We will be consulting with stakeholders to determine the specific content of the proposed toxic reduction plans and reports, as well as the kind of information that would be available to the public. If passed, the act would be phased in over several years, with the first report submitted to the ministry as soon as June 2011. Our government would then establish an electronic reporting system and a website to ensure that Ontarians have easy access to the information.

I want to point out as well that while the proposed legislation requires facilities to produce toxic reduction plans, implementation of those plans is voluntary. There has been some debate as to whether it should be voluntary or mandatory, but the voluntary nature of these plans is consistent with the advice we have received from our expert panel, as well as the position taken by the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Environmental Defence. It is further validated when we look to jurisdictions like Massachusetts and New Jersey, which have had these laws on the books, in the case of Massachusetts, for 15 years, and of New Jersey for at least 10 years.

They clearly indicated that voluntary reduction plans lead to successful toxic reductions that actually take place in the workplace. Both jurisdictions report that

mandatory planning—the planning is mandatory—combined with voluntary implementation is an effective approach. We're learning from the experience of these two leading jurisdictions in North America. Voluntary implementation lets facilities set goals they can meet at a pace that reflects their capabilities and resources. Facilities can also be expected to speed up their timelines as they begin to see evidence of the cost savings. There are cost savings, and I will give you some examples of that shortly.

As Ontario firms realize the opportunities in the new green technologies and increase their competitiveness in the global market, they are looking for positive environmental practices from their suppliers and consumers, as we all know, are gravitating to companies that are green. It's certainly been the case over the last year or so, when just about every company advertisement talks about the greening of their own particular situation.

But let me just say this: If this act is passed, our government intends to invest \$24 million to help industries, particularly small industries—

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen:—including the industries in the region of Durham, transform their processes, find green chemistry alternatives and reduce the use of toxics in their operation. Companies in Ontario that have already made the shift confirm its advantages—and I should tell you, some companies have already done this, totally on a voluntary basis. Let's just take a look at how it's affected some of their operations.

Dr. Hamdy Khalil, who's the global director of R&D and product development of the Woodbridge Group, states as follows: "As leaders in the field of reducing or eliminating toxic substances our company has recognized the benefits of adapting biotechnology and has pioneered its commercialization. We strongly support the government's toxics reduction strategy and encourage all Ontario manufacturers to identify ways and means to reduce toxics and realize the many benefits for workers, customers and society at large."

Let me just tell you about another company in Oakville, the home riding of my parliamentary assistant, Kevin Flynn. It's called Prokleen Washing Services. They have benefited from voluntary reductions they've already made. This company, Prokleen, cleans all classes and sizes of trucks and containers and has invested already to reduce its toxics. What have the results been? According to their own figures, \$198,000 in annual savings to the company, almost \$200,000, and—what's even more important to the environment—the elimination of 35 tonnes of toxics a year from the environment.

Fred Granek of the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement states quite matter-of-factly, "It is possible for small- to medium-sized manufacturers to improve their performance and save bags of money," and that's been the experience, by and large, of most companies in Massachusetts and in New Jersey: mandatory plans, voluntary implementation. The centre reports that 55 pollution prevention and toxic reduction strategies

introduced by its clients experienced a payback time of less than one year—that's the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement. Fifty-five pollution and prevention toxic reduction strategies introduced by its clients experienced a payback within a year.

Our made-in-Ontario approach would build on the federal method of toxics reporting that's required under the NPRI, and that's the National Pollutant Release Inventory. A key difference is that we would require reporting on the use of listed substances that are toxic while the federal process simply reports on the emissions. Again, we're looking at it from the front end of the manufacturing stream rather than from the tailpipe end.

I can assure you of this: It's not our intention to make this a difficult process for facilities or one that duplicates current work. They're already reporting on the vast majority of substances that we intend to introduce for reporting purposes initially to the federal system right now. We are proposing that companies build their plans and reports for Ontario on the work that they're already doing for the federal government. We are also looking at how we could align reporting timelines and dates with the NPRI to facilitate reporting.

There's one other fundamental area that our proposed legislation and strategy would address. Along with managing the use of toxics and ensuring that Ontarians have easy access to information that they should and have a right to know about, the proposed legislation is designed to propel Ontario forward in building a green economy and create green-collar jobs. I cannot stress this enough: It's all about creating a green economy and creating green-collar jobs. A green economy offers tremendous opportunity, and our leadership in this area will mean success and prosperity for our province and people, and a higher quality of life for all of us.

1440

As part of our toxics reduction strategy, our government plans to support innovation in the field of green chemistry and engineering. As professor Paul Anastas, who's a professor of green chemistry at Yale University, has said recently, people who originally thought that green chemistry was just about environmental concerns are now seeing that it also increases process efficiencies. It is an engine for the innovation side of the business and provides an ability to distinguish yourself in the market with new products with new capabilities.

Companies in this province, this country and world-wide will be increasingly looking for technologies and products to help reduce toxics, and we in Ontario are second to none in our potential to fill that need. We have the researchers and capabilities to be at the forefront of discovery, we have entrepreneurs looking for new opportunities in the shifting economy and we have a well-educated, highly skilled Ontario public eager to take up the challenge and deliver the products and services, and we intend to take full advantage of that.

Our government plans to turn the challenge of dealing with toxics into an opportunity and become a global leader in toxic solutions, a global leader in the green

revolution. Once again, if this legislation is passed, we will consult with industry to identify research priorities, set up academic chairs to help address barriers to commercialization, and develop professional capacity in the field as well.

Our government consulted widely on this proposed Toxics Reduction Act as well as on the strategy I have outlined. We've consulted with business, industry and academia as well as municipal, environmental and health organizations, including Cancer Care Ontario and the Ontario Medical Association. Last year, we posted a discussion paper on the Environmental Registry and received solid input that helped determine the best way forward. The proposed bill has been on the Environmental Registry and will remain there until at least May 7, and we invite public comment.

Our government is confident that we are proposing a fair and rational approach to toxics reduction. This act would benefit our people and our province and put Ontario at the forefront of toxics reduction in Canada. Because protecting our environment is a shared responsibility and no one jurisdiction can make all of the difference, I've also written to the ministers of environment across Canada and urged them to take a similar approach to toxics reduction in their own provinces for the benefit of all of us here in Canada.

Ontario's proposed Toxics Reduction Act and the toxics reduction strategy that's contained therein will strike the balance between protecting human health and the environment and supporting the transformation of business to the green economy. Reducing toxics is necessary, not just for today but also in the future. So once again, let's all work together in this House to make this bill a reality so that we can work towards a clean, green, healthy and prosperous Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm always pleased to listen to the minister. I am also pleased to compliment him on the fact that he is working with the federal government. The federal government has certainly taken the lead on that. In fact, it could be argued that under the leadership of the Conservative Party—this was in our election material, as you probably know, as you're used to imitating good behaviour. All I say to that is that most of what you said we wouldn't have much of a problem with.

The reason I'm being a bit—I'm really quite honestly waiting for the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, our critic, to add some substance to this, some meat to the bones, if you will. Most of this is actually going to be set up in regulation, as we know. This does give the minister a fair amount of power. I'm kind of looking for the administrative part of it. I think I found it in section 44, under "Other Matters." In there I see the emergence of the normal expectation of the Liberal government of a lot more red tape and a lot of government inspectors coming around to kind of check things out. In that section 44, for instance, there's a lot of red tape.

Section 45 is a good one. That section there is "Disclosure to Government of Canada." There should be

consistency for trade and other reasons between provinces and jurisdictions so there's clarity, so there's no ambiguity about it. Since the federal government's taking the lead on this issue and they're setting the standards, we should at least be consistent.

We're all in the interest of public safety, so there's some good and bad mixed in here. The bad part is the exemption of some of the persons working—for instance, an employee in the ministry can't be charged; do you understand?—even if they're making a mistake. In one of the sections there, section 49, "Regulations," they could also make regulations about things that aren't hazardous, which seems a bit strange. That occurs in section 48.

But again, when you look at it on the whole, on principle, this is something we support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's a bit of an odd spot to be in in this particular debate, because I listened to the minister intently and much of what he said I'm not going to take issue with. I think most people understand from a business perspective that if there are better ways of doing things as far as reducing your use of chemicals, there might be an offset when it comes to savings. Not only that, it's good for the environment in the end. But this bill's a bit odd. I'm really going to have to look at the details of this before deciding if I'm going to vote for or against, because what you're doing is saying you're going to make it mandatory to make a plan. That's the first step. But there's going to be no requirement to achieve any goals at the end of the plan, once the plan is done.

So you have to ask yourself the question, then why are you doing it? I know the government's going to say, "Well, at least if they're drafting the plan, they're looking at it. They're turning their attention to it, so therefore they will be more aware and it will encourage them to do whatever has to be done to reduce the amount of chemicals that are used by those particular plants." But if you don't mandate some sort of target at the end, at some time period after the plan is done, you've got to ask yourself, "Why are we doing this?" It would be akin to having an occupational health and safety act that says, "There will be a health and safety plan that is put in place in every workplace across the province of Ontario," and you will make sure that these plans are posted and that they're discussed between the workers and management and the Ministry of Labour, but at the end of the day not have any laws or regs or enforcement when it comes to bad practices.

I guess this is where we're going to have to have a little bit more explanation from the government. I know what some of it is already because I've been listening to the debate and I've been listening to and reading the media reports on this particular bill. But clearly, there's an intent for the government to be seen as doing something positive but really doing not a heck of a lot in the end. I look forward to the minister's comments in regard to how, in fact, we are going to encourage employers to reduce toxic use over a period of time with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to congratulate the minister for his comprehensive approach to this problem, reducing toxic chemicals in our daily lives. As you know, he's also spearheaded the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act, the source water protection act, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, so you can see this is part of a continuum. As you know, he comes from a wonderful part of this province where they're very conscious of keeping not only their land environment but their water-bound environment clean. He represents the beautiful islands of Howe Island, Amherst Island, Wolfe Island. They have to protect those water-bound islands.

I would say that this bill is really part of an educational thrust, because many companies, many small firms and large firms, need to get expert advice on how to reduce their dependency on chemicals. For too long, not only Ontario firms but firms all over the world have found it easier to use chemicals to manufacture their goods, and as you know, they haven't looked at the downstream effects of what they use in production. So this \$25 million will be spent on educating our firms on how to reduce their dependency on these chemicals, so that in the long run, our waterways especially and our groundwater will not be impacted by these chemicals, which, for the most part, remain in our water courses for generations to come.

1450

This is critically important. It's a very astute approach, and I think it's one that's keeping in line with what many prudent jurisdictions are doing throughout the world. The minister is right in taking this very learned approach in reducing our dependency on toxic chemicals.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Question and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the minister's speech on Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts.

Certainly, as the opposition, there is no doubt that we are aware of and supportive of the need for work on reducing the impact of toxics on people and the environment. In fact, as the member from Durham pointed out, it was part of our last election plan.

I was happy to hear the minister talk about not duplicating the federal government, because I know the past federal Minister of Health, Tony Clement, was developing this chemical management plan. I was with him on several occasions when he was talking about that, so it would seem not to make sense to duplicate the work that's already being done by the federal government.

Just a quick scan through the bill: I see that there's a lot of reporting required, and certainly that's wonderful. I'm not sure how the businesses that have to do the reports will feel. The only thing I would say is, there's nothing wrong with reports as long as they're actually accomplishing something, not just putting a further burden on industry.

As the Minister of the Environment is probably aware, he was talking about extended producer responsibility. I certainly support that. In fact, I had a private member's bill on product stewardship a few years back, so I support that in principle.

He was talking about electronic waste. I toured GEEP in Barrie with the member from York-Simcoe, Julia Munro, to see the good work they're doing on electronic waste.

I would say to the minister that they could make much more use of deposit return to actually incent people to bring things back versus their approach. They seem to be bringing in more taxes that aren't directly connected with an incentive for people to return things. So I think they could make much better use of that.

We'll be looking at this bill carefully. We're about to hear from our critic, so I look forward to our critic speaking next.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to thank the members from Durham, Timmins-James Bay, Eglinton-Lawrence and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their comments.

The major difference in mandating that a plan be followed rather than a voluntary implementation of a plan is that if we mandate that companies follow the plans that they have put into place to reduce the toxics, the plans simply aren't going to be as strong as if we do it on a voluntary basis. They're not going to impose such heavy restrictions on themselves that they will be forced to follow than if we do it on a voluntary basis.

We're taking the best possible advice from the expert panel that I talked about earlier. We're taking the advice about what's happened in other jurisdictions such as Massachusetts and New Jersey. Although at first glance it may seem to be at odds, that it's better to have a mandatory following of a plan that they come up with, they tell us that it's a lot better for them to voluntarily implement their plan, because otherwise their plan simply wouldn't be as strong as it possibly can be.

From the experience of other jurisdictions, they've also clearly shown that over a period of time, the mere fact that they're planning the various toxic legislation—

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: And we're hearing some other comments in the background here.

The mere fact that we're doing it on a voluntary basis will, in fact, allow companies to use less of the toxic materials than they're currently using.

In any event, we look forward to the debate. We're always open to suggestions and committee amendments that will strengthen the bill, and we look forward to debate in the House and at committee later on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity to debate Bill 167, on the reduction of toxics. I do wish to discuss the benefits of our approach, which was

put forward, versus what is being proposed today. In my view, the basic differences are simple and impactful. These differences centre around the key element of working with already well-established approaches to toxic management currently in place through the Canadian government and through business best practices, all the while providing the carrot, or the incentives, along with the disincentives, or the sticks, to ensure that we do achieve some mutually shared toxic reduction goals. That's our approach: less emphasis on process, more emphasis on results.

We do question the timing of this initiative, given the economic realities in our manufacturing sector, our mining sector, our processing sector, our forestry sector and certainly in primary industry. We do question what relevance a 20-year-old Massachusetts law may have with respect to mining in Ontario, for example. I don't think Massachusetts is known as a big state as far as the mining industry goes. As for manufacturing, we also know that much of the industry and manufacturing have left the state of Massachusetts over the decades.

I do ask those present in the House to think back to the spills bill for a moment. You may recall at the time that the government's own Industrial Pollution Action Team called on this government for a comprehensive approach that would focus on incentives to better enable government to partner with industry in meeting those shared environmental goals we all strive for. You will recall, as well, that the recommendations of the same Industrial Pollution Action Team, also known as IPAT, put together with experts by the same government, were ignored. The recommendations for incentives to achieve clean environmental results in the spills bill were not adopted by the government.

I will quote a few sections from that government IPAT report. I refer to the executive summary: "We believe the long-term solution will require a multi-pronged approach, including introduction of regulatory requirements for pollution prevention plans; spill prevention plans, including multiple barriers; and spill contingency plans." But this is my point: The expert panel went on to call for "the legislative framework that incorporates economic or other incentives to go beyond compliance, regulatory requirements for operator training, improved spills notification and routine communication systems, including resolution of jurisdictional confusion." Again, that was from the government's own hand-picked Industrial Pollution Action Team.

Let's fast-forward to the introduction of the present bill. There's no mention of spills prevention, no mention of contingency planning, no mention of jurisdictional coordination, no economic incentives, no training, nothing even approaching a multi-pronged approach, as was called for in the report of the government of the day.

Five years later we have Bill 167. I feel we are witnessing the same mistake: the mistake of overlooking the carrots in favour of sticks. This is what we see before us. I propose that we have the same need for incentives to help deal with toxics that are being overlooked in the approach we see today.

I also fear that as with much of the recent pesticides experience, for example, we're seeing government decisions, legislation and, eventually, regulation based on emotion and concern as opposed to fact and science. Again, much as with pesticides, there are already well-developed toxic regulations available from the federal government and through the federal chemicals management plan, also known as CMP.

1500

I question the need to spend millions of government and business dollars on meeting goals that are already being met through extensive science-based work by our federal cousins. I'll get back to more on the concerns later during this hour, Speaker.

The bottom line: We in the PC caucus, we in opposition, look forward to working through this proposed legislation towards an effective plan that hopefully will see government and business work together to not only reduce but also, where possible, replace and eliminate the use of toxic substances and the related health and environmental hazards.

As opposition, there is no doubt that we are aware and supportive of the need for work on reducing the impact of toxics not only on humans but on our environment. In fact, as I reported when Bill 167 was introduced, this government proposed legislation that in some ways is actually following up on the lead set by the PC Party ahead of the 2007 election. Just to go back to that time, it was April 27, 2007, that we announced our PC made-in-Ontario plan to move on toxic reduction. As such, we have been somewhat bemused to see the McGuinty government follow our lead with regard to enacting a plan to reduce toxics. For example, we proposed drawing on the Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act, also known as TURA, and then, five months later—this was September 24, 2007—the McGuinty Liberals proposed the same wording, drawing on the Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act, also known as TURA.

As many know now, the Toxics Use Reduction Act, TURA, requires Massachusetts companies that use specified quantities of listed toxic chemicals to evaluate pollution prevention opportunities, implement them if practical, and measure and report the results on an annual basis. In Massachusetts, they must also evaluate their efforts and update their toxic use reduction plans every other year.

Now, there are varying reports as to the overall success of that Massachusetts legislation. However, it is generally accepted that in the initial years after its introduction in 1989 the program did lead to some important toxic reductions—first of all, a 50% reduction in the generation of hazardous waste; secondly, a 40% reduction in the use of toxic chemicals. That was 20 years ago. However, in later years—I don't think the Minister of the Environment made mention of this—the Massachusetts TURA program tells us a different story.

At one of the Ministry of the Environment public sessions last fall with respect to this toxics discussion paper, an industry person who had worked in Massachu-

setts indicated that a good part of the reduction that is being attributed to the program and to the legislation is actually due to the fact that industry has been shutting down or leaving the state of Massachusetts for various reasons. So the implication is that only a portion of the reduction in toxics in Massachusetts could be attributable to that 20-year-old piece of legislation.

I would suggest the Minister of the Environment call Massachusetts. We were on the phone to Massachusetts this morning. We've received some e-mails, and I do wish to report to this House information received from the Massachusetts Chemistry and Technology Alliance. They outline their experience after 20 years of living with this law, and here's what they told us: Essentially, there's no evidence that this led to anything. The way it is structured, it has led to loss of jobs in Massachusetts and has done little or nothing to improve the environment down there.

There are really three significant changes that have occurred since the PC Party made our proposal to take a look at the Massachusetts model as far as toxic reduction plans.

First point: As I said, Massachusetts has the experience of 20 years now, and what they learned is that while there's some initial benefit—and that's what we understood as well—of writing toxic reduction plans, it's not sufficient for the reduction of toxics. There no proven environmental benefit from writing these plans. The reasons are that the way the Massachusetts law is written, the one that's now being copied by the Ontario Liberals, the result is paperwork and redundant plans that do not lead to reductions over the long term. This is known from 20 years of experience in Massachusetts.

Interestingly, it's only the state of Massachusetts that has adopted this legislation. It has never been copied. I'm told this, and I asked the question, why? And the answer is because it's ineffective. The fellow we communicated with this morning, Dave Wawer, with this Massachusetts industrial alliance, is presently proposing amendments to this particular legislation, and I would hope that those involved with this bill would take a look and work with Massachusetts as they try and rewrite a 20-year-old bill. Again, let's not make the danger of copying flawed legislation of 20 years ago. California looked at this in 2007; they dropped it.

Second point: When our party proposed this approach a few years ago, the federal government was not in the business of chemical management. Now we have a world-leading piece of legislation in Canada that has already reviewed 23,000 chemicals, identified those that require greater scrutiny, and has an action plan for reducing risk of those high-risk chemicals. Creating another piece of legislation with different requirements for different substances really doesn't make much sense.

The third point: We're currently living through one of the greatest recessions in our lifetime. Ontario, as we all know, has lost hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. We're essentially fighting for our economic lives in this province. We can't handle the additional cost unless

there's a clear benefit. Creating useless reports at a high cost for business doesn't count as a benefit to the economy, and it doesn't count as a benefit to the environment.

In view of what has occurred in the last several years, what would make sense for this particular piece of legislation? First of all, don't copy word for word the Massachusetts law, which is flawed. Let's put together a made-in-Ontario approach, as we proposed before the last election, something that would truly get results and help protect the health and environment in this great province. This legislation must take advantage of the federal spending in this area by focusing on reduction plans for substances that already have been identified as a priority concern, and the feds are doing that. Third, don't saddle business with a useless and costly paper burden, but instead create value for business by helping them to learn about new environmental technologies and adopt them to their present business practices.

Just to carry on—and I'll have a chance to talk a bit more about that Massachusetts model a little later—before we get too far ahead of ourselves, I feel it's important that people here have an understanding of exactly what we're talking about when we refer to toxics. The word "toxin" is from a Greek word, *toxikon*, a poison relating to use of poison in arrows, for example; a poisonous substance produced by living cells or organisms. I think of the poison dart frog in central America that is used by aboriginal people to produce the poison for the arrows. I just found this out—I find this interesting; I don't know if anybody else is interested—the poison in the poison dart frog comes from the fire ant. If you've ever been bitten by a fire ant, you would know what I'm talking about.

As far as a toxic substance not produced by living organisms like the fire ant, "toxicant" may be a more appropriate term, although "toxics" is the acceptable plural. Again, when I talk about intoxicants—we're not talking about rum or cocaine or products like that. Toxics are substances commonly understood to be determined through laboratory and other studies to have a harmful effect on human beings, on wildlife, on the natural environment upon which we all depend. Toxics are often thought of as complex industrial chemicals, but they can also be naturally occurring substances as well. I think of ammonia, certain metals. I think of lead and mercury.

1510

The government of Canada's glossary of chemical substances defines chemical substances as, "Deliberately created, produced as a by-product of other processes or occurring naturally in the environment"; they "can be either elements or compounds." Adverse effects from toxics can result from short-term or long-term exposure and are influenced by a number of factors: dosage, obviously; duration of the exposure, as well as the sensitivity of the human being, the animal or the plant that's exposed to the particular toxic substance.

I wanted to bring to the attention of the House the definition of the word "toxic" as a starting point, because essentially this is where our concerns begin to take shape,

right from the beginning. You see, according to my understanding of the wording in the proposed legislation we're debating today, there really is no definition of the word "toxic" in this bill. I know it sounds strange. Here we are telling business and industry and people in Ontario that we will be ensuring reduction of toxics, and yet we don't tell them what those toxics are. We won't find out until the legislation is passed, and then we have to wait for the regulation phase.

It does say in the bill, under "Definitions"—and I don't consider this a definition—"toxic substance" means a substance prescribed by the regulations as a toxic substance for the purposes of this act." The general public are going to have to bear with some of this arcane language. So now, do we know what a toxic substance is? It's what the regulation says it is. I'm not sure if we are getting somewhere with this legislation or not. Maybe we aren't.

Furthermore, under the "Regulations" section of the act, we read subsection 49(1): "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

"(a) prescribing substances as toxic substances or substances of concern for the purposes of this act."

So again, after reading this legislation thoroughly, one can determine that we don't yet quite know what a toxic substance is, but we definitely want to reduce it once we find out what it is. This is where we stand with this legislation.

We get a little better idea where this government is heading when you look into the ministry's own Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel. Under the terms of reference for this panel, it reads, and this is under expected outcomes:

"(1) Identify priority toxics for immediate attention.

"The panel will review lists of substances of known concern provided by the ministry, provide advice on actions that may further reduce releases and/or exposure and rank their priority for attention.

"(2) Provide ongoing advice on the assessment, management, prioritization and substitution of toxics....

"The panel will review lists of substances of emerging concern in Ontario and advise the ministry regarding assessment and/or action that may be taken to determine risk to Ontarians and/or to reduce releases and exposure."

However, I feel there is an easier way, a less costly, less duplicative, more effective way of doing this. This may come as news to the McGuinty government, but the federal government has already developed what many consider to be a world-class chemical management plan, also known as CMP. If I refer to CMP, that's what I am talking about. This CMP is governed by the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, CEPA, and has a well-known approach as far as deciding what chemicals need to be assessed and a rapid and aggressive timetable for doing those assessments and then developing regulation. So I'd like to repeat this, just in case some aren't listening, and I think it bears repeating: The federal government already has an established, comprehensive, technically sound basis via the chemical management plan,

the CMP, to assess and determine which substances are considered toxic. Adhering to the federal CMP would ensure that toxics identified for potential reduction are based on sound science and a risk-based process while avoiding any regulatory duplication and hence minimizing added cost.

The initiation of this process does date back to 1994 when the federal government created that list, that inventory of 23,000 chemical products used in Canadian commerce up to the late 1980s. This inventory—here is another phrase: the DSL; it's known as the domestic substances list. At the same time, new substance notification regulations were passed under the Environmental Protection Act requiring any substance not on the DSL to be screened and potentially controlled or prevented from entering the marketplace in Canada. In the past few years, the federal government has begun the work of assessing the potential risks of these DSL substances to human health and to the environment. In 2006, our federal government—and again I mentioned that chemicals management plan, the CMP; it includes a challenge program for approximately 200 high-priority chemicals from that DSL, that list. This program issues challenges to industry to provide information on batches of chemicals, 15 to 30 in a group, every six months. Based on the information received, the federal government assesses whether the chemical is CEPA toxic and determines appropriate risk management measures. But now we have the McGuinty Liberals jumping in to play “Me too,” if you will. At what cost? How many rules and regulations, forms to fill out and reports to file, how much red tape and paperwork do we need in this kind of legislation to deal with something that's already being dealt with at the federal level?

For those who may not be aware of the process, here is what the feds are already doing to assess and decide what exactly is a toxic process. If you look at a government of Canada website, there's a heading, “Determining What is Toxic.”

“Under CEPA ... both the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Health are responsible for developing a list of substances which must be assessed in a timely manner to determine if they are ‘toxic’ or capable of becoming ‘toxic.’ This list is known as the priority substances list.” This one's referred to as PSL.

“CEPA ... requires that substances on the PSL be assessed within five years of their addition to the list. Environment Canada and Health Canada have a legal obligation to determine if these PSL substances are ‘toxic’ as defined in section 64 of the act. ‘Toxic’ is defined in terms of risks that substances pose to the environment or to human health.”

A substance that is found to be toxic under that section 64 through a priority substance list assessment, a screening assessment or a review of a decision of another jurisdiction is recommended for addition to the list.

Substances may also be added to the list of toxic substances in schedule 1 of CEPA 1999—again, I can name a section, section 90 of the act—without having gone

through a priority substance list assessment, a screening assessment or a review of other jurisdictions if, on the recommendations of the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Health, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that substance is toxic. “A substance is ‘CEPA-toxic equivalent’ if it satisfies the definition ... as a result of a systematic, risk-based assessment. Such assessments can include determinations made under other federal statutes, or can incorporate appropriate elements of assessments done by or for provinces,” like Ontario, “or territories, international organizations or other appropriate scientific authorities.”

I guess the question is, how many new provincial bureaucrats and company experts are now going to be required to replicate this kind of process at the Ontario level?

1520

I'd like to make mention of another product that became well known through the federal process that is already in place. I'm referring to bisphenol A. That was the result of a federal program, the federal release in 2008 of its draft assessment of bisphenol A, also known as BPA, declaring it toxic under CEPA, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and proposing that baby bottles containing BPA be banned from the marketplace.

Those who follow this will know that bisphenol is a chemical compound found in hard, clear, lightweight plastics and resins. It's used in the production of various types of containers—drink containers—compact disks and automobile parts. It's even used as a liner in metal cans. However, animal studies suggest that once ingested, BPA may imitate estrogen and other hormones, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Health Canada's evaluation of bisphenol A, launched in November 2007, included a review of human and animal studies around the world, and research into how much of this chemical is leaching into consumer products—I think of baby formula, for example.

In their assessment, they did focus primarily on infants and newborns, and determined that the main exposure for newborns and infants was through the use of polycarbonate in baby bottles. When they're exposed to high temperature, we see the migration of bisphenol A into the baby's food.

The studies reviewed included a January 2008 study by the University of Rochester, which indicated that BPA stays in the body much longer than anybody had thought. This study was published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Another study, published in September 2008, also examined BPA exposure in human beings. In that study, they took a look at 1,455 American adults and found that 90% of the participants had detectable levels of BPA in their urine. The researchers said that those with the highest levels of BPA had nearly three times the odds of cardiovascular disease compared with participants who had the lowest levels of BPA. The study also found that people with high BPA levels had 2.4 times the odds of

type 2 diabetes in comparison with those who had the lowest levels.

Some peer-reviewed journals have indicated that even at low doses, BPA can increase breast cancer and ovarian cancer cell growth and the growth of some prostate cancer cells—that was an animal study.

Yale researchers found that when BPA was administered to pregnant mice, it altered the gene responsible for normal uterine development. This was in the *Journal of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology* in June 2007. They theorized that “if pregnant women are exposed to the estrogen-like properties found in BPA,” bisphenol, “it may impact female reproductive tract development and the future fertility of female fetuses the mother is carrying.”

The result of Health Canada studies—their assessment, their review of all this literature—was that as of October 2008, Canada became the first country in the world to ban the import and sale of polycarbonate baby bottles containing bisphenol A. Here is an example of something that is real, effective and achieves results—results that are achievable when we work with science in a risk-based process, which we see embodied in this federal CMP approach.

The CMP, the chemicals management plan under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, is exactly what I mean when I make reference to a neutral, objective, science-based approach.

I fear that there’s a tendency for this government to stray from that approach when we take a look at the kind of legislation that’s being proposed, let alone what may come up in regulation. I also fear that in the process of following this provincial direction, as I said, we’re duplicating costs, we’re duplicating the work, which could be more effectively used in other areas to reduce toxics in our society.

Really, this should not be about growing the bureaucracy or creating an additional unnecessary burden on business to fill out government forms and merely follow process, and I’m not alone in saying that.

Richard Paton, president and CEO of the Canadian Chemical Producers’ Association, had this to say: “Ontario had an opportunity to introduce legislation that would have protected its citizens while taking advantage of federal government spending in this area.... Instead, they have added significant cost to industry at a very bad time”—and, I might add, questionable costs not only to industry, but to government and to the taxpayer. I will get into a discussion a little later on the timing of this initiative.

I received a release from Ian Howcroft of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters echoing some of these concerns. It states:

“The proposed Toxics Reduction Act places a high emphasis on process rather than achieving results. Moreover, the Ontario government through this bill is moving in the opposite direction of federal-provincial harmonization. The federal chemicals management plan is one of the most stringent processes in the world.

“Duplicating this process at the provincial level is not necessary and we believe that Ontario must leverage and stay aligned with the federal government both in respect to the reporting of substances, as well as the assessment and science behind the list of substances deemed toxic.”

This release was signed by a number of industry organizations. They represent close to 80% of the industry in this province. Some of the names found on this release will be familiar, as they drive what’s left of our provincial economy, ever bearing in mind that we have lost well over 300,000 jobs now in the manufacturing sector. The statement I just read is signed by the Automotive Parts Manufacturers’ Association; the Canadian Chemical Producers’ Association, which I mentioned; the Canadian Foundry Association; Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters—I quoted from them; the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute; the Canadian Plastics Industry Association; steel producers; vehicle manufacturers; the forest industry; Ontario Waste Management; the Cement Association Of Canada; the Rubber Association of Canada; and the Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association. That’s an important list. They’re all saying the same thing: They want to be part of the solution, but this government is taking the wrong approach.

Speaking of wrong approaches, you would think that this government would learn from experience. I think of the recent pesticide experience whereby this province has told people and businesses in Ontario that it’s unsafe to use products that have been deemed safe by the federal government, by Health Canada. As we know, there has been much debate on the McGuinty pesticide ban that’s leaving the public—that there’s something inherently wrong with using these products that we use to grow our food, for example. I told this Legislature when it was first debated that the cosmetic pesticide ban would lead to roadblocks.

To that end, I’d like to read an excerpt from a local paper, the *Delhi News-Record*, April 23. They run a column by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. “The pesticide ban has generated growing debate relating to lost investment. Dow AgroSciences has initiated a challenge under the North American Free Trade Agreement to Quebec’s law banning a specific chemical.” As we know, Ontario always seems to follow the lead of late and Ontario followed the lead of Quebec in banning pesticides for cosmetic use.

1530

I just continue quoting from the OFA statement: “Under NAFTA, companies can claim that new laws or regulations are indirect expropriation of property without fair compensation. This is something farmers can relate to. This challenge puts the federal government in the ridiculous position of defending a Quebec law that prohibits the use of a product Health Canada has declared perfectly safe—a classic example of absurdities created by regulations that are intended to be politically correct rather than science-based.”

I think of the McGuinty greenbelt—the greenbelt delineated by boundaries drawn not by science but by

political science. So I do warn of the difficulties involved when you attempt to create duplicate processes in different, overlapping jurisdictions, really, to reach the same supposed goals. There's clearly a precedent with the very recent pesticides ban in Ontario, and I feel it does bear consideration before we move forward on this particular piece of legislation. It creates questions about the assessment process. We currently have an assessment process in Ottawa.

Not only are we concerned about the duplication and concerned about the lack of science-based assessment, but there is also concern that as businesses work to identify the long list of substances that the government's toxic panel will highlight, we will be missing opportunities to actually work on the key substances that cause most of the impact. So there seems to be a complete lack of direction towards a risk-based approach. That's why the Cement Association of Canada had this to say on the lack of risk-based initiatives contained in Bill 167, again the toxic reductions bill:

"A risk-based approach focused on quality of effort, rather than quantity, would be both more efficient and effective in reducing such risks.

"A legislated requirement to develop comprehensive ... balance systems and generic ... management plans for all of the listed toxic substances, regardless of the actual risk posed, would not represent a good use of industry or government resources."

This is a key criticism of the similar blanket approach to release reporting under—I'll quote a regulation—O. Reg 127/01 and the national pollutant release inventory: "The obligation to estimate releases on such a broad number of substances results in low data quality. As a result, all regulatory control efforts—where real risks are posed by the same substances—must then be accompanied by additional mandatory reporting and emission reduction requirements."

A more efficient and effective approach to the management of toxic substances in Ontario would be to establish toxicity thresholds for the priority substances in question—targeting reporting and management plan development only on those sectors and activities that handle or release the substances. Such an approach is consistent with what is being done in the United States and in the European Union.

Clearly, there is a need to ensure that we are putting our efforts, not to mention our dollars, towards where they would do the most good. Therefore, putting work, putting money into listing and tracking substances that are not released as part of normal operations, and I think of a refinery, for example, when we could be concentrating our efforts on those substances, those releases that have the most impact on the environment and on human beings—to not do that is really defeating the purpose of why we would even bring in a law like this.

If a substance is used but is not released as part of normal operations, it's not a risk to humans, to the environment, except in a case of an emergency situation that results in an uncontrolled release. Given this, the prime

focus should be on reduction of emissions and reduction of releases based on risk, where that risk is a function of the hazards coupled with the impact. Again, a risk-based approach is what we see in that federal chemicals management plan.

I wish to quote the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association:

"The federal risk assessment process is well respected, well resourced, costly (costs Ontario should not try to duplicate), and a global leader."

Through utilizing the federal risk-based, science-based work on toxic assessment already being done, the chemical producers go on to say that Ontario "would leverage the efforts of the federal government and would apply its requirements for planning reductions to the right substances—those that have been shown to actually pose a risk."

So the question remains, why should we be spending our government resources, our business resources, on an inadequate system that's doomed to achieve little in the way of effective results because of its lack of an effective focus and, obviously, lack of a science-based, risk-based, approach?

Why reinvent the wheel? It's rolling along quite well. Why replace your snow tires with summer tires in the middle of the winter? Why do that? It makes little sense to go through a bureaucratic process just for the simple reason of going through a process.

I think of another way of trying to explain this to those opposite. In 1969, I spent time in Southeast Asia, during the time of Vietnam, and talked to many US soldiers on R&R in Bangkok. I talked to one US soldier who explained to me in great detail what was going on in that Vietnam war. Every night, his platoon would conduct the obligatory patrol, but they set it up. They went into a park in Saigon and secured the perimeter with razor wire. They floodlit the whole park. Every night they would do the patrol in the middle of the night, as required, and then send a bullshit report to McNamara in the Pentagon. That's how that war was fought in the eyes of—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask that the member withdraw that unparliamentary language. Thank you.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do withdraw.

I felt very strongly about that at the time. That was not the kind of war that my father fought. That's probably why those guys lost the war. It was all about process, and it was not about getting results.

Having said that, we in the PC caucus are certainly cognizant of the fact that a toxics reduction strategy for Ontario would be beneficial. It would be an extremely worthy endeavour to protect the environment. But the point is, let's win this war. Don't take the Liberal way and just go through the motions, file a paper and maybe it looks good occasionally on the 6 o'clock news.

Toxics and their potential impacts have a long and varied history in this province and in this country. Obviously we have federal law, and it's incumbent on government to ensure that those substances with a scientific-

ally determined “most risk” are reduced or eventually eliminated from manufacturing, processing, industrial sectors.

There are reasons for this kind of vigilance in Canada. As I indicated earlier, we’ve got over 23,000 chemicals and substances that are in use every year. There are hundreds of new substances that come on board. These substances are used in the manufacture of vehicles, obviously, in paper, toys, electronics, food. They are used in the production of medicine. They are the basic elements for virtually everything we do as far as industrial or productive activity. Certainly, they can result eventually in release into the environment.

1540

So we’re in a province that’s got one of the largest and most diverse industrial and commercial sectors certainly anywhere in North America—or we did have, anyway. And until the McGuintyites took over, we did have a very significant industrial sector. This made Ontario a vibrant place to live and to work. It also means that in Ontario—it goes with that—we do have unique challenges, including dealing with some of the most significant releases of toxics and pollutants anywhere in Canada. Despite the pollution abatement efforts that have been made, I’m told Ontario industries release the second-largest amount of certain toxics in North America, so there is concern. There’s scientific concern and public concern regarding the presence of these chemicals in our environment and regarding their health implications. Of particular concern is the exposure of individuals to chemicals during certain life stages: early childhood, as I mentioned earlier, pregnancy.

The combined effects of toxic chemicals on our health are difficult to measure. Full toxicological evaluations have only been conducted on a fraction of the substances or groups of substances, and scientific concern is growing, in particular with respect to people in those biologically sensitive stages in their life, early childhood or prenatal.

It’s important to recognize other factors. Chemical exposure is just one of many factors. There are others with respect to certain diseases; cancer, for example. Social, economic and genetic factors can influence the initiation or the recurrence of many diseases. Although the precise effects of multiple toxics are not known, there’s a 2006 report—this is the Commission for Environmental Co-operation—which identified adverse childhood effects of particular concern in North America, again related to environmental pollution. The list includes cancer, learning disabilities, impaired endocrine function, birth defects and respiratory problems. Asthma seems to be an increasing problem.

In Ontario every year, the number of newly diagnosed cancers increases by 2.5%. There’s a 2.5% increase in cancer every year. As we know, tobacco decreases every year, but cancer is going up. Figure that one out. Maybe that’s circumstantial evidence. By the year 2020, there will be 91,000 new cancers diagnosed.

It’s important to note that not only environmental carcinogens but occupational carcinogens dispropor-

tionately affect certain sectors of Ontario’s labour force. The number of workers exposed to asbestos 30 years ago was about 16,600. Most of these people worked in construction. Some were in non-metal mining—asbestos, obviously. Ontario had four asbestos mines at one time. About 3,500 people worked there. Most of them quit running by the 1980s. People who work in petroleum refineries, manufacturing and automotive repair are also affected.

Ninety per cent of Ontario’s population lives in the Great Lakes basin; therefore, another very good reason to take toxic production very seriously. It’s a great source of fresh water but very sensitive to pollution and to direct discharges of toxics, not only directly into the water but from the air as well. We have municipal treatment plants; they are not designed to deal with these kinds of products. So there are lots of examples of how these toxics have impacted our world within the Great Lakes. In the studies that were done on herring gulls it wasn’t hard to detect the accumulated, persistent presence of DDT, PCBs, dioxins—mercury, in some cases—and other effects on children of mothers who were ingesting fish from Ontario waters.

In the Water Quality in Ontario 2008 Report, phosphorus levels in many rivers and streams, including some that feed into the Great Lakes, still exceed guidelines. That’s why we have algae. Hamilton harbour and the Don River are two of the hot spots in Ontario’s Great Lakes, although some progress is being made. There’s been improvement in acid rain in the Sudbury area, but there’s still evidence of areas “severely acidified.”

This helps us put the issue of toxics in perspective. Much of our daily lives rely on clean, unpolluted water, and there’s no doubt that there are levels of other products—pharmaceuticals, plastic and personal care products, and other things I don’t like to think about—found in our waterways. This is unacceptable.

Not to get sidetracked, I do want to once more express my concern on acid rain that this McGuinty government can be missing opportunities to eliminate power production emissions from our environment. It refuses to implement clean-air technology in Ontario’s coal plants. It has now been five years that nothing has been done to clean up the coal plants.

All the toxic-related impacts I have been talking about in this hour are, of course, a great concern for all of us in this House and across the province. Especially given the statistics presented by the MOE, we do realize that the province of Ontario is one of the top dischargers of toxics in North America, and we’re the number one source of toxics in Canada. We’re told that “Ontario industries release the second-largest amount of recognized developmental and reproductive toxicants in North America, behind Tennessee.

“Ontario industries release the fifth-largest amount of known and suspected carcinogens in North America, behind Texas, Ohio, Indiana and Louisiana.”

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What do you think of that?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Someone asks what we think of this. All of this is what prompted our party to take the

lead in announcing our own toxics reduction strategy in April 2007—there wasn't a heck of a lot announced by the NDP before that election, as I recall. We made this announcement five months before Mr. McGuinty tried and failed to duplicate our initiative. That has seen this government follow that lead and announce the legislation we see here.

As our environment critic then, Laurie Scott, stated in April 2007, "Toxic contaminants are a serious problem—one that's been building over too many years.

"In an era of rising cancer rates, it is vital that government, businesses and individuals work together to reduce—and wherever possible—completely eliminate the use of these substances and the health hazards they represent."

We understand that in an era of rising cancer rates, it's vital that government, business and individuals work together. We've got to reduce and eliminate the use of these products where we can.

At that time, we announced the opposition's plan—there was no plan at that time from either the NDP or the Liberals—of using carrot-and-stick measures to reduce and eliminate these products.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What exactly did you propose?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, one point exactly: working in harmony with the federal government to utilize the federal list of toxic substances, which identifies the higher-risk chemicals currently used by Canadian businesses. I mentioned this earlier. This is the key to everything I'm talking about. Again, it has to be science-based; it has to be a risk-based approach that avoids duplication and makes the best use of government and business resources while creating the most effective results.

1550

The plan went further, for those who are interested:

- requiring every Ontario business that uses a restricted chemical on the federal list to disclose their use of that chemical to the public;

- requiring businesses to prepare a plan which evaluates all of their options for reducing or eliminating the use of these toxins—the implementation will be left up to the individual operation;

- providing incentives for these businesses to adopt their plans and reduce the use of these chemicals by establishing a toxin reduction fund, taxpayer-funded—they could perhaps have a joint fund—and introducing such measures as targeted tax measures, in other words, carrots;

- sharing best practices to help small business learn from others how to take steps to eliminate these toxins by creating an online idea bank where entrepreneurs can learn first-hand from what similar businesses have achieved inside and outside of Ontario.

We made that announcement shortly after Mr. Tory accepted an invitation from Environmental Defence to have his blood tested for toxins. Environmental Defence came to Queen's Park—I think they came to his office—and analyzed Mr. Tory's blood, along with two other

political leaders, as I recall. Each politician was tested for 70 chemicals. They fall under the following groups: phthalates; PCBs—these are the polychlorinated biphenyls; PFCs—that would be perfluorinated chemicals; OCPs, organochlorine pesticides; organophosphate insecticide metabolites; PAHs, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons; and bisphenol A, the one that I referred to earlier. Seventy chemicals were tested; 46 were detected—66%. That would be in the three leaders of the day; that would be Mr. Tory, Mr. Hampton and Mr. McGuinty, as I understand it.

The number of chemicals detected in each volunteer ranged from 41 to 44. Many of the chemicals detected in the politicians are associated with adverse health affects. In total, and here's the list from Environmental Defence—I don't have the lab results with me—33 were carcinogens, 24 were hormone disrupters, nine were respiratory toxins, 39 were reproductive or developmental toxins and 12 were neurotoxins, detected in the three volunteers.

Of the three Ontario politicians, Dalton McGuinty had the highest concentration for OPIMs; Howard Hampton had the highest concentration for PAHs—that's the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons—and the phthalates; and John Tory had the highest total concentrations for PCBs, PFCs and OCPs. Dalton McGuinty and Howard Hampton had the highest concentration of BPA. That's the bisphenol A; that's the product that's found in tin cans that are lined with plastic.

That was a good public relations move that has obviously helped create better understanding within the Ontario public of the residual accumulation of these products in three political leaders in the province of Ontario. That was the kind of testing that helped—actually, the PC Party used that as a bit of a springboard for our announcement on toxic reduction and a plan that called for a number of basic points that I have explained during this past hour.

Just to wrap up, we asked this government to make amendments to this legislation, come up with something that works and come up with something that gets results. Don't just go through the motions and go through the process, somewhat akin to the example I used of that GI in Vietnam. They lit up a park in Saigon, did the obligatory patrol, and every night they sent the silly report to McNamara in the Pentagon. They lost the war. They were caught up in a bureaucratic, paper-driven process that really had nothing to do with anything, and they lost.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say at the outset—and I'll be speaking in about 10 minutes—that New Democrats strongly support strong government action when it comes to protecting the health of our environment and the health of Ontarians.

When I listen to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk—we're able to reflect all of our differences beautifully. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk says, "We should do less. We should have less bureaucratic

red tape for corporations, which includes how we control chemicals on these poor sectors that have to provide jobs for workers. So we should have little control.” Marchese, representing the NDP view, says, “We should have more control,” and then you’ve got the Liberals in the middle saying, “We’ve got to go somewhere in the middle.” This is the ideology that’s being expressed here today, and it’s beautiful because I’m going to attack the Liberals in a short while for not doing enough, but that’s the way it is.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I’m going to support you a little bit and attack you as best I can while saying to the Tories—when they say, “How many forms should corporations fill out?” I say, “As many as it takes,” because I believe that the health of our kids and the health of human beings should override the needs of the corporate sector.

In my mind, there is no confusion about this. It’s not a question of whether or not they should be filling out forms if the health of our kids and the health of human beings is affected by it. For me, the whole idea of, “Oh, more forms to fill out, and there’s no evidence that chemicals are really damaging human beings”—please. How many years have we been dealing with this, for God’s sake? Where are you folks on this issue? You’re so far behind. I look forward to more debate from the other Conservative members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’ve heard so much rhetoric about, “One political party believes this and another political party believes that.” Let’s come back to what Bill 167 is all about. Proper science-based methodology requires the thorough tracking of toxic compounds from the point at which they’re produced until the point at which they’re disposed of, and that’s what this bill is all about.

Bill 167 requires designated facilities to keep track of what they generate in toxic substances and also to keep track of where it goes. If we want to get toxic substances out of our environment, then we have to be able to find them, and that’s what the regulations in this bill do.

To get into some specifics, Bill 167, the proposed Toxics Reduction Act, if passed, would require designated facilities to do basically three things: track and evaluate their current use and release of toxins—that’s a good thing; develop a plan to reduce the use and the release of the toxic substances—that’s a good thing; and make a summary of the plan available to the public—that’s a tremendous thing.

If we want to, for example, reduce phosphate concentrations in our rivers and our lakes, then we need to be able to track them. We need to be able to help our industry switch to less toxic substances and move to cleaner, healthier alternatives. People support this because it’s really a fairly simple concept. More than 90% of Ontarians equate the reduction in toxic substances with something like climate change in their priorities. That’s what this bill does. It helps track toxic substances through supply chains and enables consumers, retailers,

distributors, wholesalers, agents, integrators—you name it—to determine how much toxic material flows through their business, and if they know about it, they can minimize it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I came back this afternoon to listen primarily to the member from Haldimand—Norfolk because he has been working on this file for a long time—not just this, but on the environment generally. He’s qualified to make some of his observations, which I think is important as well. He has, I believe, a science-based background and, as such, something he said that impressed me most is the simplicity of what he’s saying that, if something works and is something that can be verifiable—it’s sort of a science-based approach.

1600

There is good reason to think that they are following the federal government’s lead, which is encouraging. I think it’s important, as well, to make sure we have harmonized lists, for the sake of having uniformity and consistency between provinces in Canada, instead of having another big wow or something that isn’t compliant from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, where they’re moving products from one province to another. Those kinds of things are important to get it right. Use science and use the resources that the federal government, the Harper government, is actually setting out. I think it is a good form of compliment to the federal government, imitating them so closely.

But I do become worried when I look at the onerous mechanisms the Liberals use to implement these changes. There are whole sections here about creating red tape, basically: section 42, about compliance and inspection, and also refusal of information in section 43, “Offences.” There’s a whole litany of things in this large bill. It’s mostly about, first of all, saying we’re going to do what’s right—and we support that—but then you’ve got this whole section, called “Other Matters.” You look in there and you see the red tape.

You know, it’s doing the right thing and doing it so that you can observe it and so that people can understand it. That’s what this bill is really about. We support the idea of eliminating toxic materials—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: The interesting discussion we’re having today is about a bill that’s actually been designated many times before under the moniker of brown-field, so I want to bring us back a little bit in front of the bill to discuss whether or not we believe that these types of regulatory streams are important.

If you look back, in the 1950s and the 1960s there were an immense number of chemicals and toxins that were used as cleaning agents and for manufacturing. They used to literally just simply have the barrels filled with this stuff, open the back door and pour it out into the ground. What we found were these brownfields that were filled with toxins, permeating into the water table and

going through the different territories that these companies were doing.

Now, I'm not pointing a finger of blame, because the science wasn't there. We didn't understand; we didn't recognize. As we've evolved and come to know what those brownfields were all about, we're now moving into the next era. We're taking money to fix the brownfields. We're now putting it into the vernacular; people understand what brownfields are. This is the next evolution of what we need to do in order to prevent brownfields from ever happening again, not only in the terms of the land, air and water that we breathe, we drink and we work on, but also the people who deal with these chemicals. The number of incidences of cancer that took place were just phenomenal during that time period, and we're just catching up to that now.

Look at our firefighters. We've had to regulate for those types of things that they've had to actually fight fires—chemicals burning and not knowing what that was. As a matter of fact, to this day we still don't know what some of those burned chemicals were in combination with each other. We still don't know what it does.

So this is a piece of legislation that moves us to the next level. It's a natural step that we need to take in order for us to continue to be serious about what we claim is our responsibility: to take care of the people of the province of Ontario. I fully support this bill and look forward to its passage.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the feedback from various members in the Legislature. The member for Trinity–Spadina is going down the bureaucratic paper route, and he made mention of, how many forms does it take to fill out—well, how many does it take in supporting that kind of approach? I do say to him that there are much more effective ways to deal with some of these toxic chemicals than just to fill out forms and file a report every year. It's very important to engage the enemy and to get some results.

I mentioned that we phoned Massachusetts this morning, and I got an e-mail from a Dave Wawer. He's the CEO of the Massachusetts Chemistry and Technology Alliance. As far as filling out forms, they've been filling out forms ever since Willie Horton was in penitentiary in Massachusetts, ever since Dukakis was the governor of—

Mr. Mike Colle: That was an uncalled-for reference. He's already made one comment that's unparliamentary, and another one's been made—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member from Haldimand–Norfolk to withdraw that reference.

Mr. Toby Barrett: They've been filling out forms ever since Dukakis was governor.

Mr. Mike Colle: That's better.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Is that better? Coming from the left-winger over there—

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Anyway, from Massachusetts, I got this this morning. The only fact I can link directly to these chemical use reports is that as manufacturing jobs have left Massachusetts for other states or countries, the reporting of chemical use has declined. So there is a direct link between filling out these forms for all these years—the reporting of chemical toxics went down because the industries, according to this memo I got this morning, have left Massachusetts over those years. So you're not going to pull this off just by a report every year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a pleasure—first of all, I would like unanimous consent to stand down our lead, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member has asked for unanimous consent. Is it agreed? Agreed. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker.

From the outset, I will say that I am not an expert. I have strong feelings on the matter, but I am just an ordinary guy, you know, who reads this and that. But please allow me to welcome you to this political forum. It's 4:05 and we're on live. It is a pleasure to speak to the bill, I have to say.

I've got tell you, I disagree so strongly with the Conservative Party on this that I don't know how to hold myself back. I mean, these are the people who say we need science to guide us. These are the same people who led the fight against the dangers of tobacco because there wasn't enough evidence that smoking killed people. So we've delayed the science of smoking-caused cancer for 70 long years. It's possible that there are still many Tories and their ilk who probably say we still don't have enough science to link smoking and cancer. I almost believe that they still believe that.

But the argument is the same. These are the chemicals that have been killing people. There are hundreds of chemicals in these cigarettes. I invited Devra Davis to a meeting a couple of years ago to talk about the right to know—the right to know who's who in your community, what sector is producing what chemical, what it's spewing out into our water and into the air. We have a right to know.

For me, the ideal solution would be to ban all chemicals that we suspect or know are carcinogenic. That would be the better way to go, rather than just the right to know. But even the right to know is not strongly connected to this bill. I want to speak to that in a few moments, and I can.

Devra Davis wrote a book called *The Secret History of the War on Cancer*. It's a good book. She said that Germany knew in 1930 about the link between smoke and cancer, and they suppressed that information.

The sad thing is that even the Royal College of Physicians delayed its 1962 landmark report on smoking

and health for years, due to the tobacco industry influence.

So many people knew the dangers of smoking and the chemicals connected into that cigarette, built into the cigarette, and the effects of it, and they were suppressed by so many people, including, as I say, the Royal College of Physicians. Please. Come on—"science." We know that cancer, asthma, infertility, learning problems and birth defects are all being increasingly linked to our exposure to toxic chemicals. We know this, yet the Tories want to say we need more science and more research. Every day we get more cancer, more asthma, more infertility problems, more learning problems, more birth defects than ever, and they say, "We've got to study the matter." Come on; it's tiring. I get tired, after many years of being in this place, to listen to this crap.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, but I get tired. I'm sorry; you tire me. You tire me out. And then we know, and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk understands, that in North America, Ontario is second—

1610

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —that in North America, Ontario is second only to Texas in the tonnes of toxic chemicals being released into the air—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He's so wrong in everything he says.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Whoa, whoa. You'll have your two minutes. Hold on.

Ontario's second only to Texas in the tonnes of toxic chemicals being released into the air and water, and going to our landfill sites. This is no proud record—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah, but if you know what you're talking about you can do that for 20 minutes. Take your turn. Calm down.

This is a shocking fact and one that should underscore the need for a strong toxics reduction plan for the province.

And then more facts: Ontario use of cancer-causing and reproductive toxins is higher than jurisdictions with similar emissions levels. In 2004, Ontario released three million kilograms of known or suspected carcinogens into the province's air, including—I can't even pronounce these carcinogenic terms. Let me try: trichloroethylene, ethylbenzene, styrene and formaldehyde. These are chemicals that kill. I can't even pronounce them, so ugly are these terms—and they make them unpronounceable so that people don't learn how toxic they are. This leaves Ontario as the fourth-highest emitter of carcinogenic chemicals in North America. And when it comes to reproductive toxins, Ontario ranks even worse: We are the second-highest emitter of reproductive toxins, second only to Tennessee, releasing more than four million kilograms into the air in 2004. Ontario's industries account

for 36% of a total Canadian discharge of reportable chemicals into the air and 50% of discharges to water. This is serious stuff. We're debating as if it's not real.

Then the Liberals produce this plan, as is their trademark, to pretend they're doing something big, like the way McGuinty comments on the need for "a tough new toxic reduction law and a carcinogen reduction strategy." He calls for a plan that "puts Ontario at the forefront in North America on tackling this issue." So you listen to this man, this Premier, and you think, my God, we're going to get something really, really tough. And then you look at the content of the bill and you say, where's the tough McGuinty on this matter? I look at this stuff—and I'll do my best; again, as I say, I'm no expert—but I look at it and I say, let's look to see what he says. It says it's to track and quantify toxic substances used and created, prepare a reduction plan for each toxic substance, report progress on reducing substance released into the environment and make a summary of the plan. That's it. The member from Mississauga-Streetsville puts it out as if this is real revolutionary stuff. Please, member from Mississauga-Streetsville, you're doing something but don't pretend to be proud of something that's really not very strong.

Let's look at it, because the purpose of the bill is what I just wanted to allude to. Here's what the bill reads: Protect human health and the environment by reducing the use of toxic substances—which seems okay, right; promote the use of safer alternatives to such substances, recognizing the public right to know the identity and amounts of toxic substances in the community from various facilities and apply the precautionary principle of sustainable development to these issues. Whoa, whoa. Sorry. This is what the Canadian Environmental Law Association was recommending. I beg your pardon, I wanted to read what the purpose of the bill, as stated in the bill, versus the purpose of the bill as it was put out by the Canadian Environmental Law Association, so I have to begin again.

Starting from the very beginning of the bill, New Democrats are concerned with its stated purpose, and Bill 167 reads, "The purposes of the bill are to prevent pollution and protect human health and the environment by reducing the use and creation of toxic substances, and to inform Ontarians about toxic substances." That's the extent of the purposes.

When you hear what I read, which I must repeat now, what the Canadian Environmental Law Association—their purpose versus what the bill does, you can see the dramatic difference between one and the other and how little the Liberal government does versus how much is expected of them from people in the know. So to re-read what the Canadian Environmental Association proposed, that is, to protect human health and the environment by reducing the use of toxic substances; promote the use of safer alternatives to such substances—which they do not propose; recognize the public's right to know the identity and amounts of toxic substances in the community from

various facilities; and apply the precautionary principle and principles of sustainable development to these issues.

Of these four principles, only the first one is included in Bill 167—only the first one. The Liberals are quite happy with that. For them, it suffices. They take none of the other purposes that the Environmental Law Association is recommending. Why not? Why don't you take that on? Maybe the parliamentary assistant will help me out in his 20-minute speech coming right after, but he might be able to answer this question: Why didn't you take the definition as recommended by the Canadian Environmental Law Association as yours, in your purpose, versus only the one element of that bill? Why not? I look forward to the member from—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Oakville.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—Oakville to help me out on this.

And there are other issues. On the issue of targets, the member from Oakville, Bill 167 sets no targets for toxic reductions and benchmarks regarding the success of this initiative. In the ministry-created minister's Toxic Reduction Scientific Expert Panel, the recommendation for targets is made twice. On July 2008, in the memorandum to the environment minister, the expert panel states the following: "Ontario's pollution prevention legislation should ... include clear, viable and progressive goals (i.e., a percentage reduction in toxics use and release in the province within a specified period of time); the statute should include renewable toxics reduction targets, and a mechanism for monitoring and public reporting on achievement of those targets. The panel notes that goals are not set in the current discussion paper ... and program."

Ontario's failure to create a set of targets for toxics reductions contravenes the most successful toxics reductions legislation like those in Massachusetts. By failing to create targets, Bill 167 is also ignoring the advice of CELA, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, that recommends a 50% reduction of releases and a 20% reduction in use within five years of the first mandated reporting period. That's the second one I would like the member from Oakville to comment on, if he's taking notes, but I suspect you're not going to bother retorting to what I'm asking you. I'm assuming, but I'll wait and see.

The third one is sectors affected by the bill. No particular sectors are defined in Bill 67 except in the MOE's discussion paper; it identified two sectors to be affected by the toxics reduction bill: manufacturing and mineral processing. That is all. Absent are waste treatment plants, energy generating plants, some of the highest emitters of toxic substances. There is some terrible reasoning in restricting two sectors rather than aiming a toxics reduction strategy at any facility that is endangering the health of Ontarians through the release of a reportable substance.

Why are you not including everything that affects the health of kids, women and men, young and old? Why don't you include every sector imaginable that is hurting, has been hurting and will hurt, will damage and will kill young, old and not so old on a regular basis? I look forward to the member speaking to what I have said.

1620

On the issue of schedule 4 chemicals, it's very interesting. Schedule 4 is set to be phased in as well, and according to the MOE's discussion paper, schedule 4 chemicals are classified as "reproductive toxins, neurotoxins and mutagens," which are chemical agents that change genetic material, DNA, "as well as carcinogens." The question is, when is schedule 4 set to be phased in? The answer is, perhaps never. We don't have a clue. My sense is that it may be done sometime in the future, but we don't know. The member from Oakville may know, and I'm hoping he's going to tell me and the citizens of Ontario. If you know, let me in on it. I'm going to—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would. I think I would. I think the citizens and taxpayers of Ontario would get it, too. If you're only including two sectors, why are you doing that? And if you know that other places—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'll have my 20 minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You will. I know you will.

My view is this, member from Oakville: You're not going to respond at all to my questions. I can guarantee 99.9% you will not respond to my questions—guaranteed.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Don't be so negative.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm just predicting what he may or may not say, and I suspect he won't respond to my questions. On the issue—

Mr. Dave Levac: What if he does?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If he does, I'm going to listen, and we'll see, because even if he responds, I suspect he will say very little or nothing. But we'll see. And if he doesn't agree with me, he'll simply say, "I don't agree with you," as a way of just not talking about the issue, which is brilliant, of course. I understand.

Then there's the whole issue of fees. Bill 167 fails to create a fund and does not impose fees on the regulated businesses, and we believe this is a mistake. The minister's Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel had the following to say about this issue: that "the toxics use reduction strategy be funded by fees levied on the regulated community, recognizing the cost saving potential of efficiencies discovered through the toxics use reduction planning required by the toxics use reduction legislation." The absence of a fee structure and creation of a fund has grave implications for the success of this strategy. You need to have a fund so you can have experts. You need to have oversight. You need to have research. You need to have planning. All this requires some bucks, which you're not going to put into place. We believe those who are killing us should be paying a fee so that we have a few dollars to be able to provide the experts, do the oversight, do the research and do the planning.

Member from Oakville, please help me. Help the citizens. If you don't want to help me, help the citizens understand why you're not doing it. And if you don't want to help the citizens, help the taxpayers, because they understand too. I'm convinced you guys have taken this little measure, as you always do with bills and never dare

do what is right, because you are so afraid. You're so afraid of everything and you never want to be able to take anything on with the right strength, the right determination and the right focus. That's what you do all the time.

We know that this has worked very well, and the Massachusetts experience tells me and tells many others that all this has worked very well. I'm going to read what lessons we've learned from that jurisdiction. In Massachusetts, the Toxics Use Reduction Act set the standard which we should be, at a minimum, meeting, or hopefully surpassing. Their legislation was introduced in 1989, and since then the following has been achieved: a 41% reduction in toxic chemical use, a 65% reduction in toxic waste, a 91% reduction in on-site releases, and a 58% reduction in toxic chemicals in products shipped out of state. All this occurred between 1990 and 2004. The reality is that Ontario is set to introduce a toxics reduction strategy that would place us at the bottom of the barrel when compared to other jurisdictions.

So I say to you, member from Oakville, the parliamentary assistant: Be bold, be clear, tell us why this bill is so weak. I challenge you, New Democrats challenge you, to do a better job. Bad economy or good economy, if these toxins and these chemicals are killing us, it doesn't matter. Our health overrides the concerns that corporations might have. My health overrides everything else, and I believe citizens and taxpayers agree with me. So I want you, member from Oakville, to clearly respond to some of the issues I've raised, because I know our critic is going to raise so many more tomorrow. Please, before he gets on to speak for an hour, help me, help the citizens and help the taxpayers with your knowledge of this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I think the member from Trinity-Spadina has raised some good questions. I know if the member from Oakville, the parliamentary assistant, can't get the answers for the member today, he will certainly be able to come up with those answers. I think what the member from Trinity-Spadina brought forward has been very helpful. He gets you to think.

As he was saying in his introduction—remember, if you grew up in the 1950s, the Marlboro Man. And all those doctors were advertising smoking: “Most doctors smoke du Maurier” or whatever they used to say in the ads on TV. We were told, “Don't question the scientists from the tobacco companies. They say that cancer is not linked to tobacco smoking.” They lied about that for decades and decades. Not to say this is comparable to that concern over the cancer and tobacco, but it's the same mindset the Conservatives had: “We've heard nothing about protecting the chemical industry and protecting the manufacturing of chemicals.” We say, yes, they have a right to work in partnership with government, but there also is an obligation by government to ensure that the chemical producers are doing things that are copacetic, that are not harmful to the environment. That's all. Both are compatible. You don't have to have a hostile chemical industry.

This legislation will try to work in partnership with these industries to make sure they're not unnecessarily using these toxic chemicals in production, and both can benefit by it. I think the chemical industry, which is interested in good public policy, will support this type of partnership. That's what this bill tries to do: protect public health and protect our industry. That's why we are trying to put this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm interested in hearing his comments. I understand where he's coming from, because he said he wasn't an expert—and I understand why he's not, as he delivered his speech. Basically, he has no trust whatsoever toward any of our corporate citizens, including the people who make energy.

We see this—and I support some of the comments my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk made when he talked about more bureaucracy. We've already seen almost 300,000 manufacturing jobs leave this province since this government took over. We know there's not a friendly environment out there toward business. They may try to spin this legislation and some of the comments, saying, “We're here to protect our friends in business,” but the reality is that's not the case at all. If that was the case, we wouldn't have seen almost three tenths of a million people out of work in the manufacturing industry.

I'm disappointed in the fact that some of the comments are directed in a negative way toward our caucus or toward Conservatives. The fact of the matter is, at the federal level there's been a lot of work done on this particular subject. The detailed list of data has been acquired, and I know that Tony Clement has worked on that himself as a federal member of Parliament and a cabinet minister.

As we move forward, I would hope there could be more trust and less bureaucracy toward business.

1630

I hope there's no one in this House who would want any kind of toxins impacting any citizen of the province of Ontario, because these are our kids and our grandchildren who we have to protect for the future. But at the same time, they have to have jobs as well, and we have to make sure that we work in partnership with our industry so that we can continue to stop this exodus of jobs out of the province of Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm sure that the comments made by the member from Trinity-Spadina were, as usual, quite eloquent and made his points. But I'm going to pick up on the first part of what I heard when he started to speak, and that is, this legislation is not a bad idea, as far as the concept goes. I think that none of us disagrees with the idea of being able to make sure that the employer community out there, industry and others, is able to put together a plan that lists the types of chemicals that they're using within their processes. Certainly we know by experience that in other jurisdictions where that's been done and there's been some force of time tied to it, as far as some guidelines of when they should be

reducing, by how much, and with targets, there has been a fairly significant reduction of toxins going into our atmosphere and going into the groundwater. But just as importantly, it has been a savings for those companies that have gone that way.

The government is doing, I think, something that is not a bad idea. Certainly we support the idea of having legislation that would force the organizations out there to put together a plan to identify the types of toxins that they're using within their employ. But then the next part is what's missing. I agree somewhat with the Conservative member in the sense that, if you're just doing a plan, all you're really doing is creating a bureaucracy—not a bureaucracy, but you're creating somewhat of a burden on industry to do something of which we say we want nothing done with in the end. That's kind of the conundrum you hear. On the one hand, this legislation's going to say, "We want the employer community to put together a plan," but there's going to be no mechanism to say what the targets are that we want them to reach within a certain period of time. Without those targets, what you're really doing is educating the employer about what they're using, but you would think they do that already. So it's a bit of a veiled piece of legislation.

I look forward to the continuation of this debate. I'm sure that I'll get an opportunity to speak on this further, but I think that's probably the biggest criticism, at this point, that I can see.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Indeed, I think the member from Trinity–Spadina made some really key points this afternoon during second reading debate on Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act.

I just want to share a bit of a story. People in this chamber who know Peterborough well will know that in the mid-1960s, Canada Packers had their eastern Ontario slaughterhouse located where the Holiday Inn is located in Peterborough today.

I remember as a very, very young child that when the cattle would come into Canada Packers at that time, they would slaughter the cattle, the pigs and other farm animals. They had sluiceways right at the back of the operation. I really don't want to describe today what was put into Little Lake, which was essentially part of the jewel of the Trent-Severn system. Of course, one of the offshoots of that was that the water quality, from a public health perspective, was severely jeopardized. Little Lake flows into the other parts of the Trent-Severn system.

I know that the member from Durham is paying attention to that. As a fellow who grew up in Peterborough, he would remember that operation rather well, as it was the central slaughterhouse for Canada Packers.

Also, three or four decades ago, GE in Peterborough, when they used to test their transformers, one of the ways they would do it was to fill up the transformers—they had big pits there that would be full of oil that contained PCBs. Prior to shipping those transformers on flatbeds, they would drain the PCBs out of those transformers, and

it got into some of the water sources around the Peterborough area. Thank goodness that of course, over a period of time, GE made tremendous advances to clean up that particular problem.

We know what Bill 167—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Trinity–Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank the members for their two-minute contributions.

To the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, they also developed what was called a "safe cigarette" many years ago. It was no safe cigarette; it kills. Smoke kills. Do I trust the tobacco companies on this? No. Do I trust some of these corporations, some of these owners of industry on the issues connected to chemicals? I do not. Does it matter to me whether there is a recession or the economy is good, if companies knowingly are producing and using chemicals that are killing me? Does it worry me? I say they should not. Their right to use those chemicals should not override my right to be protected—absolutely not. And if it means red tape and people filling out forms, fill them out. Get rid of those toxins; eliminate them. They should not be used.

In my mind, we know that cancer, asthma, infertility, learning problems and birth defects are all being increasingly linked to our exposure to toxic chemicals. Everybody knows it except those who deny it: the industries and those who defend them. I don't defend that kind of killing of human beings; I do not. And so I'm saying, you, the government, have done a great deal of research on this in the last year. You have used the minister's toxics reduction expert scientific panel that made a lot of recommendations for you, which you have not adopted. Why not? You can have a bill with teeth, and you can set a higher standard. You should be doing that and not just having a little bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It certainly is a pleasure to rise today. Obviously, I'm here to speak in support of Bill 167, our government's proposed Toxics Reduction Act. I think it's a wonderful piece of legislation. I think it comes forward at a time when people in our society, both from the business world and from other portions of our society, are asking that this type of legislation be brought forward.

Earlier in the afternoon, as part of the debate, we had remarks from the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable John Gerretsen. He was saying that he sees this bill as taking action on toxics reduction. What it means to him, really, is that it's about building a high quality of life for all of our people in Ontario.

Toxins in our environment are a great concern right now; I've seen some of the public polling on this. It's a top-of-mind concern for a great many Ontarians in all of our constituencies throughout the province; not just in Liberal constituencies but certainly in Progressive Conservative and NDP constituencies. They say that close to 90% of people in Ontario believe that reducing toxics is

as important an environmental concern as air pollution, water pollution or climate change.

One of the great things about being around politics for so long is that you see how issues change in their importance to society. I go back to the days when you used to be able to spot the environmentalist in the audience. You'd look out there, and it would be the person with the John Lennon glasses, the long hair, the hemp shirt and the sandals. You can't do that anymore; that's changed now. When you go out to community meetings in my neighbourhood, or when I go out and speak around town, when people are concerned about the environment, you can't spot the environmentalist anymore because we're all environmentalists. What began as Pollution Probe, Energy Probe and some of the groups in the past, which were supposedly the anti-establishment, has now indeed become the establishment. I think it's an issue whose time has come, and people are starting to understand that you can't take apart the link between business, the economy and the environment. They're linked intrinsically, and that's a bond that can't be broken.

Obviously, there are people who like to talk about a variety of issues, and the environment is no different. Some will exaggerate claims, some will deny claims and some will overstate claims. People will always say there is a need to do more, and that's probably just the human condition—there always is a need to do more to make our world a better place.

But there are some people who will do something about it. There are some people who will propose a piece of legislation, put it before the House and ask that the House consider it and make improvements and make amendments to see if we can make it better. What I think we have before us today is an intent by the government to address a very important issue in a systematic way that takes into account the economic times we're in, but also takes into account the rise of environmental concerns and some of the alarming health factors we have seen emerge in our society in the past few years.

I certainly hear it on a daily basis from my constituents in Oakville. They tell me that they want and they expect the government in power to take action to reduce these substances and to reduce the potential harm they could cause. Bill 167, in my opinion, is a wonderful way of doing that, and I think it's worthy of the support of all members of the House.

1640

People in my community, in Oakville—and I'm sure it's no different for any other speaker who has spoken today and will speak later—want to know what types of toxic substances are being emitted in their own neighbourhoods, in their own constituencies; or just when they go to the supermarket and they buy products, for example, they'd like to know what's in that product. You can buy food now—we've become more health-conscious—and you can get the ingredients of that food, the number of calories, whether it has iron in it, whether it has trans fats in it, that type of thing. I think people are starting to say that they would like to see that type of

thing used in the products they buy, too, and I support that.

What Bill 167 would do, if passed, in my opinion—the proposed programs that are contained within the bill are going to help leverage green practices; they're going to spur innovation, I think, in green chemistry alternatives, which is a term that's talked about more and more. It's going to develop new products that we just simply haven't seen on the store shelves today, probably products we couldn't imagine when we were younger, and it's going to create good jobs for Ontarians. The link between business and the economy and green jobs of the future is quite clear in this bill. The need to act on toxics, I think, is very, very clear. It's a case that's made by our constituents, as I said, on a daily basis.

But we also have people who say, "Well, perhaps you can do this differently; perhaps you should be doing it differently." For example, today I had an e-mail that came to me here in the House from Sharon Burns. Sharon is from the region of Halton. She's the unit manager for the cancer society. She looks after the unit that looks after Burlington and Oakville. Sharon has presented some worthy suggestions that I'm sure will be considered as we go through the amendments, if amendments are proposed on this bill as we go through the standing committee phase of the process, which is upcoming.

We've also heard from business. Ian Howcroft, for example, an Oakville constituent of mine, runs the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, a good organization, comes forward with great points, is interested in building the Ontario economy, understands that there's tremendous opportunity in environmental business in the future, and he has come forward with some suggestions that I think also would perhaps become considerations when we go through that time when we examine the bill on a clause-by-clause basis.

Certainly I don't think anybody from the government side has said today—in fact, I think some of the questions that have been raised by the opposition members today have been very good questions, and I think they're questions that we need to consider. I think that should be a model that is typical of any consideration of any bill before this House. I've always been a believer that the opposition parties have something to offer and should be heard from.

Now, sometimes that can be confused with—it's easy to have all the questions and none of the answers. Sometimes, I'll be honest, I'll sit over here on this side and I'll look over at the opposition side and think, "That's great. You ask questions all day long. What are your answers to this? What's your idea for this?" That's what I think the member from Trinity-Spadina was using: When you don't have the answers yourself, the oldest trick in the book is to change the channel. Certainly, as he was trying to change the channel, he made good use of my name and title and asked me if I would address some of the concerns in my remarks, and I plan to do that. I plan to do that as I move through the 20 minutes that I have, and I think I've used up about seven

minutes of that so far, and there will be some time for that in the future.

I think we need to look at the people who have assisted us in this. How did we get to this stage? How did the bill get to the point where now it's in this House and it's being considered by the House? Well, Ontario currently today—and this isn't something we should be proud of; this isn't something that I think our government should be proud of or previous governments that could have done something about it should be proud of—is responsible for the highest release of toxics in Canada and among the highest in all of North America. That's something that I think Ontario citizens, as much as they want a strong economy and they want jobs, would like to see us change. They'd like to see us become a leader in that regard; they'd like to see us become a leader in toxics reduction, and that's what this bill is proposing to do. It's going to take us from where we are, near the bottom of the pile, admittedly, to near or at the top of the pile when it comes to toxics reductions, and I think that's something that all this House should be supporting.

As I said, as the bill moves through the process there may be some changes considered along the way. It may become stronger, in some people's opinions, and I think that's a positive thing. That's how this House is supposed to function. But we definitely need a made-in-Ontario solution, I think, the approach that's going to address the potential threats to our health, safety and quality of life so we can reposition Ontario industries at the leadership point of their ability to compete and succeed in developing the new green economy that we see emerging today in our country and in our province.

The bill was developed—and this is where I want to get to the remarks from the member from Trinity-Spadina—with a large degree of thoughtfulness and a large degree of care, a great deal of consultation across many sectors, and it's been informed to date by the best scientific practices. This is where the member from Trinity-Spadina was asking some questions: "Why didn't you do this? Why didn't you do that?" The Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel, under co-chairs Dr. Miriam Diamond and Professor Lynda Collins, have been very clear. They should be recognized for the great work they've done for this Legislature and for this province. What they have said is, "What we're proposing is a way that works, a way that is going to lead to success." They're saying, "We're the experts on this." One of the co-chairs comes from the environmental law field; the other comes from the medical field. What they're proposing is a process that they said they have seen in other leading jurisdictions as being the process that is most successful.

So when member from Trinity-Spadina asks, "Why don't you have hard numbers? Why don't you have targets?"—that, to be honest, was a thought that crossed my mind when I first saw the legislation, because often that is a preferred way to go—the experts to date, and I have spoken to both of them, have been very clear that they're suggesting we go this way because this way

works. They were asked that point blank when I saw them in a media presentation. The media asked them that exact question. They replied, without any hesitation, "If you do it this way, it will work. It will lead to a reduction in toxics in your province. This is what you want to do."

We've also had the benefit of advice along the way from industry, health, the environmental field, labour, of course, municipal organizations and just ordinary members of the public who are concerned about toxics in our society, who may have had a family member who's become sick, who may have been exposed to toxins in their own lives to date, and simply don't want to see our children exposed to those same toxins in the future.

Let me just reiterate the key elements in our proposed bill and then perhaps I can offer some comments from people who have assisted us and let you know what some other people are saying about the bill to date. The intent of the bill, if we go over a review of what the bill is intended to do, it's going to require facilities that are subject to regulations to track and to report on the toxic substances they use, create and release into the atmosphere. Then, if you are one of these facilities that is under the regulations, you have to come forward then, you're required to develop a plan to reduce toxics and to make a summary of that plan available to members of the general public as to exactly what you're doing as a company, as a corporation or even as a smaller operation, to reduce toxins in our community.

A list of these substances and the substances that concern people the most to date has been proposed by the scientific experts on the Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel, and would be prescribed under draft regulation, should this bill meet the pleasure of the House and be passed. But the bill also includes regulation-making authority that's going to prohibit or regulate the manufacture, sale or distribution of a toxic substance or products that contain it, and it's going to require the manufacturer or the seller or the distributor of that product to provide notice to the public.

The other thing I think people are asking for and want is realistic and legitimate information. They don't want things to be hidden. They don't want claims to be exaggerated. What they want is the real goods; they want the truth on this. So informing Ontarians is another major objective of this bill. People demand, and I think they should be able to demand of their government, to know what's in the environment around them, what's being used in the facilities that make up part of the economy of their community. It helps them to be better informed themselves as citizens, it helps them to make better choices, and it helps them to perhaps make choices about what they buy and what they use in their own house. That's something I think we can all use as a practical example of how we can involve ourselves in the decision-making and make choices that are wise.

1650

We're also going to establish an electronic reporting system and a website that would help people monitor toxics use and releases in their own community, as well

as the actions that are taken by those facilities, those corporations and those businesses to reduce the toxic load they place on the community they are apart of.

In my own community—I'm sure this applies to many ridings a cross this province—we have a wonderful chamber of commerce. We have a chamber of commerce that I think represents business in a way that businesses in my community are very proud of. It's an organization that's got a growing membership—it's very, very healthy—and they're concerned about the environment as well. People who own businesses have children, they have families and they send their children to schools. Their children play on the playgrounds and use the same toys and products that we all use. People who own businesses aren't any different—this goes back to the spot-the-environmentalist comments I had earlier.

Just because you're a Bay Street lawyer, or just because you're an older or a younger person, or maybe you're a hockey mom or a soccer dad, it doesn't matter: You're concerned about what happens to your family and to your children. The fact that you happen to own a business or that you may be a senior executive in that business really shouldn't come into play. You want to do the safest thing for your community, and I think this bill goes a long way to allowing people in business to find a way to do that.

Some people may ask why Ontario needs to go beyond the measures it currently has. The answer is very clear: What kind of community do you want to live in? In the past, we used to think that only young people cared about the environment; if you were older, you didn't care about the environment. We used to think that business didn't care about the environment, and business people used to think that anything that was done for the environment was going to hurt their business. It was going to hurt their bottom line; it was going to be unprofitable. Those days are gone. That's the old way of thinking; that doesn't apply anymore. We know there is nothing better for good business, for good green jobs in our communities than a strong, clean environment.

So that's clear that we need to do more. We need to do more to reduce toxics. Nobody should be proud of the toxics record of this province today. I think that is a pox on all our houses in the past, perhaps of all of parties. There's nobody who can stand up and say, "We did the right thing at the right time." But I think we can all stand up today and say that this is a good first step; that this sets us on the right road for our quality of life and our health, and to position our industry to take advantage of the competitive opportunities that are offered by the new green economy.

We're building on the current approaches by focusing on what goes into industrial processes. In the past, we have always focused on what comes out—what's coming out the top of the smokestack, what's coming out at the end of the tailpipe. What we're saying in this is, "What's going into the process, and why don't we look at different ways of applying different and safer alternatives to what goes into the process to make this world a healthier place?"

I want to end with some quotes. The first is from the Toronto Environmental Alliance. Katrina Miller, the campaign director, says, "The two laws pair perfectly together, providing the public with the right to know what toxic chemicals are in their neighbourhoods and giving businesses the knowledge and resources they need to reduce pollution. It's so refreshing to see Ontario take a leadership role on toxic chemicals. We should all be proud of that, and it's a great example of how Toronto and Ontario can collaborate to make a difference."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association: "Ontario 'will be the first' jurisdiction in the country to have this kind of a strategy to cut hazardous substances and 'should really be applauded for that'...."

Liz Haugh, president-elect of the Ontario Public Health Association, says, "Today's legislation is a great first step to protecting everyone in Ontario for toxic substances. Ontario Public Health Association congratulates the government of Ontario for their hard work on this issue and looks forward to working with them on the regulations."

I could go on. Someone we all know, Dr. Rick Smith, executive director at Environment Defence, states that, "This is just the kind of innovative, forward-thinking approach we need in Ontario to green our economy and remain competitive in an era when consumers are demanding greener, safer products."

If I can get back to the remarks by the member from Trinity-Spadina, he said, "Why aren't you setting targets for the reductions of toxics?" That was one of the clear questions he asked. I'll tell you what some of the answers are, and I gave you the first answer: It's because the expert panel has told us that this is the way to do it, that this is the way that works. Other jurisdictions have proven that our proposed approach will result in real reductions of toxics use in the province. We wouldn't want to set arbitrary targets and find that they're too low. It seems to me that once these reports are presented, once we have that information, there's nothing to prevent this province, this government or this ministry from actually considering targets at that point in time, and we will be able to set much more accurate and meaningful targets at that time because we'll have a lot more information.

The member from Trinity-Spadina, in his sequence that had all the questions but none of answers, said, "Why are you only targeting certain sectors? Why are you only going to the manufacturing and the mineral processing sector?" The answer is that, combined, they account for the bulk of the emissions. Where else would you go? You wouldn't target a small section; you'd go right to the top sections, to the biggest bulk, to where the problem is. So I hope that helps the member from Trinity-Spadina in some of the information that he has asked for.

But other people have said that this is the way to go. The people who are experts in this field have told us that this is what they want us do. I think this bill is worthy of the support of all members of this House, and I'd encourage all the members who are present here today

and those who are here when the bill is voted on to give their strong support for Bill 167 and bring forward amendments in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 167. I'm pleased to hear the member from Oakville make reference to opportunities for improvement, because I think that there are two major flaws with the bill as it is proposed that could be drastically improved. If you are truly looking for input and engagement from manufacturers and citizens, it stands to reason that you would include things like actually defining what you are going to include in the bill when referencing toxins and be as specific as possible on which areas are going to be covered off in the plans so that we can actually get that consultation that is necessary.

It's interesting, when you compare what is in the Liberal platform, which said, "to create a tough new toxic reduction law that requires companies that emit toxic pollution to reduce their emissions over time," and yet, with this piece of legislation, there is a section that references writing a plan, but there is no part including a reduction. The reduction becomes the voluntary part; the minister referenced it in his opening comments earlier today.

To me, those are two very large improvements that need to happen with Bill 167: actually defining what you mean by "toxins" and what will be included, and, of course, if you are trying to improve the reduction, then you need to put that in as part of your plan and not just say, "You have to have a plan, and we won't worry about whether you are going to in fact reduce your use at all." I would encourage that public input.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just heard the rationale that the reason you don't put targets in is because expert panels have indicated that you don't have to have targets in order to be able to achieve the goal. That's a bit of an odd statement, I thought. I've been here for some 20 years, and when I've watched legislation come through the House, there are a couple of ways of coming at it. If you're trying to achieve a certain goal, normally you say, "Here are the targets that we want people to meet within a certain period of time." To have legislation that says that we're going to have people create a plan that demonstrates what they have as far as toxic chemicals within their plants, and not set goals about how to reduce or eliminate them, or identify at least those that are the most dangerous and work with them to be able to replace them with less toxic chemicals, then what's the point?

I guess you can argue that this is not a bad idea. To have the plan at the very least helps them identify, I guess from the government's perspective, what they're doing in the plants. Do you think they're not doing that now?

1700

I worked in the mining industry where we operated gold processing mills, and we were using all kinds of

chemicals in those plants. We knew what those chemicals were. The company knew what the inventory was. They knew how much of it they had to buy. They knew what the price was. The workers were trained in the safe use of those chemicals, by and large, sometimes kicking and screaming, but we did it nonetheless. In the end, the companies knew what they were using in their plants. The issue was some of the chemicals may have been able to be replaced with less toxic chemicals to both the environment and the health and safety of workers, and I think that's what we're trying to accomplish here.

It's a step in the right direction. You can't say that this is bad. But certainly to God, there has to be some mechanism in order to have a carrot-and-stick approach or something in order to reduce the amount of toxins that we're using in industry to make it safer for workers and the environment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I support Bill 167. Of course, we know that the proposed Toxics Reduction Act would protect health and the environment, position Ontario industries to compete and succeed in the new green economy and inform Ontarians about the toxins that are used in their communities.

We happen to live in one of the most beautiful areas in the world, and I really believe that we need to be so concerned about what kind of a province we're going to leave for our children. This act addresses many of the issues and realizes that the government has a responsibility to create the regulations so that we will leave a better province for our children.

Another thing that I haven't heard mentioned yet today is the need—the honourable member for Timmins—James Bay spoke about the need for having a plan for businesses. We have firefighters all across this province who go into buildings, and having those plans in place will give them the opportunity to know what they're up against when they go in.

My father was a firefighter in the city of Winnipeg, and recently a good friend of mine, Mr. Bob Orr, who was a school trustee in my school board and a retired firefighter, passed away from lung cancer. We lose so many of the firefighters in this province and in this country, and so much of it is because of the chemicals that they were forced to put up with during their careers.

In my area of the city of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock we have many rivers. We depend upon our tourism industry. Knowing what's going into our waterways and into the land is so crucial to what we rely on in the tourism industry. So having these regulations in place I think will do great things for the businesses and our communities. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech by the member for Oakville on Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts.

The member for Timmins–James Bay was talking about his practical experience in the mining industry and he used the terminology that there should be legislation used as a carrot-and-stick approach. That's exactly what I would say this legislation definitely borrows from the PC election platform from the last election. That was the exact terminology that was actually in our platform. We said that we believe in a toxics reduction plan that uses both carrots and sticks to reduce and eliminate toxic contaminants, and then it went through a list of what should happen.

I would like to advise that I did meet with representatives of the Canadian Cancer Society, local representatives in Parry Sound–Muskoka, Wallie Anderson and Debby Andrews, who are obviously concerned about toxins and their effect on cancer. They have sent recommendations for how they think the legislation could be improved, which I have received. I believe that there's so much more that can be done just with the general public in terms of what goes down our drains, in particular. People have things around the house and end up just pouring them down the drain, in the garage, down the toilet or whatever. There's a lot that can be done with the general public to keep things out of our water supply that should not be in our water supply.

I personally have had some private member's bills that have been aimed at keeping things out of our landfill. For example, I had a deposit return bill for batteries in particular, because so many millions of batteries just end up in the garbage and end up in our landfill sites—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Oakville has to up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for the comments from all parties on this. I think deep in everybody's heart we know that this is the right way to go. Whether we disagree perhaps on the methods, I think we understand that this is what people in Ontario are expecting from their government today. Some people have said that perhaps it's a little bit too strong, other people have said maybe it's not strong enough, and that's not unusual in a debate. I think that's healthy. It should be expected.

The member from Dufferin–Caledon asked, "What's the point of a plan if you don't force businesses to implement the plan?" That, I think, is a fair question. It's a question, as I think I said in my remarks, that jumped to mind. The answer that we got back from the experts is that based on other jurisdictions—other jurisdictions that perhaps have moved on this ahead of Ontario and that we're looking to as examples of leadership in this regard—the evidence is very, very clear that mandatory planning and voluntary implementation results in the real reductions. That's the way to go. That's what works. I think we're starting to look at some of the major culprits when we look at some of the substances that are going to be reported in the bill.

But I think it's important to note that if this bill is passed, we're going to support an industry that's going to

need some aid in transforming the way that it does business. We're prepared to offer a \$24-million investment that's going to build capacity and address the barriers and bring ideas that should result in toxic reduction into commercial use, and hopefully that technology is exportable.

So I think you can look at this as the right thing to do from an environmental point of view, but from an economic point of view, it's a very strong investment in our future, our kids' future, and I hope all members of the House support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was expecting to go a bit later, but this works out just fine. I want, just at the outset, to say clearly that I support the concept of this legislation. I think the idea of making sure that workplaces across Ontario list the type of toxic chemicals that they have within their sites, plants, mills, whatever it might be, is a good idea. I think the concept of making sure that it's properly listed, that it's public in some way—there are a number of positive things that could come from that.

One of them was just touched on a little bit earlier by one of the other members, which is that at the very least, I think firefighters who are going in to fight a fire should be aware of what they're going to be running into and to have some sort of a public registry of what is in that particular plant as far as chemicals and where they're located and in what concentrations and how much of them are stored etc. It is very useful information for those people who are in emergency services.

So at the very least, that's a positive thing, and I think on that particular basis, it deserves some merit. The bill certainly does have an ability to provide better information to the public in regard to what type of toxins are within that particular plant, and especially those people who work in emergency services.

On the other hand, on the other side of that is the public's right to know, and that's a whole other question. The public should have the right to know what is being utilized in their neighbourhood when it comes to the type of chemicals they use. I mentioned earlier that I come out of the mining industry. I worked in mines and mills across northern Ontario, mostly in the Timmins area, both in asbestos mining and gold and copper mining, and we used a lot of chemicals within those particular plants. The employers knew what they had on site, they knew how much of it, they knew where it was—they had all of that information but that information may not be available to the public because it's private information.

Again, you get into an interesting debate here. Does the public have the right to know what an employer is utilizing when it comes to toxic chemicals within their plant? I would argue, yes, I think they probably do have the right to know.

For example, in the mining industry, it's a public resource. We give licence to mining companies to mine gold, copper and other things from underground to process them into a finished, value-added product of

some type. Somewhere along the line, after it's mined, it's got to be milled. After it's milled, it's got to be transported, and eventually it goes to some other processing plant that makes some sort of finished product. I think the public needs to know, because these are public resources, what is being used within those plants when it comes to the type of toxic chemicals that are stored on site. Just the very fact of knowing what is there, I think, is sometimes reassuring, or could cause alarm bells. I understand that may make some employers uncomfortable—and I do understand that, as a person who worked in the mining industry—but I think the public does have a right to know. So having a plan made up by the employer and being forced by legislation to do so is not a bad idea. On that basis, I think there's some merit to this legislation.

1710

Where I think it really gets difficult for everybody is the issue of why we're not setting targets and goals about what we want to achieve once these plans are done. First of all, the question has to be asked, what are we trying to achieve? Do we just want to make this information public so that people will know, and that's all we're going to do about it? Or is part of the goal trying to find ways to reduce the use of some of these toxins? These toxins, once used in industry, do end up in the groundwater, in the airshed, in our food chain, and as of late all kinds of different carcinogens are now being seen and being experienced by people as a result of what's happened with the pollution of our planet.

So I agree that we need to say, "All right. You're using a chemical in your plant that is a toxin, that is known to be carcinogenic or dangerous in some way." The next question needs to be, "What are you going to do about it?" Are you going to say to the employer, "Close your doors. Don't use these chemicals any more"? That's easy for us to say here at Queen's Park, but if you're the GM auto worker who happens to be working in a paint shop where they are using chemicals, or a mineworker or a forestry worker or a pulp and paper worker, you certainly don't want to see your employer shut down as a result of not being able to use certain toxins.

My point is, we need to be clear on what we want to have happen from these plans. If we're going to develop plans, what are we going to do with them? Is it just so that we can let the public know? I think it's got to go beyond that. I think if it's got to go to, are there are other chemicals that industry could be using that are less harmful to our environment? If that's the case, how do we get the employer to move from using the more toxic chemical that may or may not be more expensive to using a less toxic chemical in the process of whatever it is they're doing in the manufacturing process or the extraction process? How do you get them there? I know that most industrial plants would say today, "God, we can barely afford to keep our doors open. Don't come knocking at our door, throwing added costs on to our processing facility. We're having a hard enough time trying to stay open as it is." Okay, I understand that. Our role as government and our role as society is to ask, "How can we

help you achieve the use of less harmful toxins in your plant?" Clearly, the government has to have some process by which to get them to do that. I think one of the aims of this legislation should be, how do we reduce the emissions of toxins into our atmosphere and watershed? So if that's where we're going, we've got to be very careful about how we get there.

The first problem with this legislation is that we're not even trying to get there. All we're trying to do is post a plan, and we're not setting any targets about how we're going to reduce the toxins being discharged into the atmosphere. I think that's one of the failings of this legislation. It'll be interesting, once we get this bill to committee, to see how many concerned citizens and people from industry and the environmental movement and academia will come before us to talk about that very issue: Should there be a target as far as reduction or elimination of the use of certain toxins? Once you've posted this information to the public, you know what's going to happen. It's like the Environmental Bill of Rights. Once you post something on a registry, people find out about it and then they start to look at what it means. As a result of that clearly transparent process, we're able to learn what's good and what's bad for the environment and we're able to act accordingly in order to, as much as humanly possible, make whatever is happening by way of the application for whatever safer for the environment.

I think the goal should be that we want to reduce the discharge of toxins into our atmosphere. If that's what we're trying to do, then once we've posted these plans, we have to clearly understand what we want to do with these plans once they're posted. Is one of the goals to reduce the toxins being discharged? If the answer is yes, and I think it should be, then how do we get the company to do it? There are a couple of different ways. You can come at it from a stick approach and just say, "We're going to arbitrarily say you can't use certain chemicals, and you've got to adjust in one way or another by a certain date and time."

I can tell you, that's been done in this province before. This is not a new concept. I was a member of the government in 1990 that dealt with the AOX issue within the pulp and paper industry. They were using chemicals that were harmful to the groundwater. Our government said, "We will not allow you to use these AOX chemicals anymore, and we are going to make you withdraw the use of that particular chemical by a certain date."

Industry went wild, I remember, and so did the workers. I remember the CP workers and the steelworkers coming knocking at my door—because I come out of a pulp and paper area as well—saying, "My God, you're going to put us out of business." But we said, "Listen, this stuff is dangerous, and you know as well as we do that there are communities downstream from these plants where people are getting sick from drinking the water coming from that river as a result of the discharge of the plant."

We sat down with industry and we said, "Okay, how can we get you there? First of all, how long do you need

to get there?" Because it's a bit of an arbitrary process. Company A might say, "Well, we need five years," and company B might say, "We need two years," and the government says, "We want it all done within two and a half years." It's an arbitrary process.

But you have to ask the question: If we're trying to eliminate a particular use of a chemical, how long are we going to give people to eliminate the use of that chemical? Secondly, how are we going to do this so that it doesn't put the employer out of work? It's in nobody's interest, if you stop using a particular chemical, that it becomes a financial strain on the company to the point of them closing their doors.

That argument will be made at times. I remember, in the case of the pulp and paper industry, when we eliminated the use of AOX, they made that argument. It was a bit of a bogus argument, to be fair, to be blunt, but there was an argument of costs. We sat down with industry and we said, "Okay, how much time do you need, and what kind of help do you need to get there, to find suitable replacements for these chemicals that you're now discharging into the groundwater?"

Out of that, we did a number of things. There were a whole bunch of investments that were made in northern Ontario, in places like Kapuskasing, Iroquois Falls, Thunder Bay and, I believe, in Sault Ste. Marie as well, and also in Fort Frances, where we went to thermal mechanical pulping, which is a totally different way of breaking down the fibre from the tree to make the paper. We were using AOX chemicals in order to break down the fibre in digesters by way of putting them through a woodroom, handling them through and then using digesters to break that all apart, using those chemicals. We decided that one of the answers was to go to TMP process—very expensive to get into, on the capital side, but once you've done the investment, it saves you money in the longer run because, (a) it's a more efficient way of breaking down the fibre so that the company can save money in the long run, and (b) it's a much less harmful process for the environment, because you don't need to use AOX chemicals in the process of breaking up the fibre and turning it into pulp.

We approached it and said, "Okay, let us help you financially to make those investments necessary," to build the TMP plants across northern Ontario that were necessary to change the process by which we broke down fibre into paper. I think it is one of the reasons that the industry survived, to a certain extent.

Yes, I remember: They were knocking on our doors. I remember them coming here from Abitibi, from Domtar and different places. I remember. I was a parliamentary assistant in Northern Development and Mines, and I was one of the people who had to deal with this on committee. It wasn't on committee, but within cabinet committee, because it was part of a cabinet committee discussion. I remember that they were knocking on our doors. They were saying, "This is going to bankrupt us." So we had to say, "Okay, everybody, calm down. Hold it a second. Calm down. We hear your argument. We, as a

government, understand there's going to be a cost associated with you not using AOX, but what we're prepared to do is to sit down with you and go through how we replace the use of AOX with something that's more benign to the environment."

We worked on it for some time, and eventually we came up with a whole bunch of different things, including the use of TMP as a process for breaking up fibre. As a result, those companies reduced their fibre handling costs within their plants. It actually saved them money. So we did something that was good for the environment and the employer, and at the end it was good for the employees in those communities, because those employers were made stronger, they were able to negotiate better collective agreements, and the municipalities in which these plants operated benefited from the economic spinoff that came out of this.

So there is a way of moving from harmful, toxic chemicals to using less toxic, less harmful chemicals, or to the elimination thereof. It's a question of, first of all, do we have the will? Is that where we want to go? And that's the question we have to ask ourselves in this debate: Are we wanting to get rid of some of these chemicals? I think the answer should be yes.

1720

Let's understand that it's going to be tough to get there, because it is going to cost industry money. So we need to say as a Legislature, "Okay, let's not throw this all on the hands of industry and on their backs, because they've been allowed to use these chemicals for all these years." It was the province that allowed them to use them in the first place. All of a sudden, we're changing the game. Well, if we change the game, we've got to mitigate the damage in some way.

That's the second part of what we need to set as a goal if we're going to eliminate—if one of goals, once you've done the plan, is to eliminate or reduce the use of toxins, what are we going to do as a province in order to assist industry to get there so that it doesn't cost them so much money that it puts a strain on their business? Because at the end of the day, we need those jobs, but we also need to protect the environment. So there's a cost. So what we save as far as harm to the environment—yes, it might be by spending some money upfront or money to change over a process, as we did with TMP, but at the end, the benefit is enormous. It's a question of saving the environment.

As a result of the reduction of AOX—there are entire communities in northern Ontario that have seen I think a healthier lifestyle as a result of the elimination of AOX, certainly amongst First Nations communities that really relied on the river system as a source of food and water.

I look back at the mining industry—another example. I worked in the mining industry, where all kinds of chemicals were being used as a result of needing to process gold or copper out of the slurry that is made through the milling process when you mine it. Again, you can't get around it: You've got to use these chemicals. There are chemicals that have got to be used to allow you

to process whatever it is you're trying to take out of the ore. The question becomes, are some of these chemicals dangerous to the environment? If the answer is yes—and I think there will be some yeses—then we've got to ask ourselves the question, "What are we going to do in order to get there?"

Again, I think we've got to ask the question. Yes, do the plans; and two, what do we want to do when the plans are done? Once you've asked that second question, then there's probably about three or four things that come after—and I spoke about one, which is the elimination of harmful toxins in the atmosphere.

But the other thing is, what do you do with those who don't want to comply? Nobody wants to talk about it in this debate, but I think you have to. If our goal as a Legislature is to make our environment safer by eliminating the use of toxins, it then stands to reason that if there is an employer out there who is reluctant and unwilling to come to the table to figure out how we stop the use of dangerous toxins in that process, we need to have a mechanism to say, "We'll get you at the table, or else we'll fine you. We'll do something to get your interest so that you're here at the table negotiating with us."

Part of the problem that I guess I have with this legislation is that I support the concept of what they're trying to do. I say to the government across the way, "Congratulations. Good idea. I don't have a problem with the idea, and I don't have a problem saying it's a good idea. Congratulations." But what I'm hearing is a lack of will to do anything as far as the second and the third step in the process. We really need to ask ourselves those questions, so I'm going to be looking forward to what members have to say here in this debate and what the public has to say when it comes to their presentations before this committee about whether this bill really gets us to where we want to go.

Then there's a whole other issue around labelling that we haven't even talked about yet. Should this legislation more properly deal with how you label chemicals that are being used not only within industry but in our everyday lives, in our daily living? There are all kinds of chemicals that we use that we think are benign. It's out there, it's advertised; we've seen it advertised on TV 15 times a week, and you see it on the shelf at the store, but this stuff is dangerous for you, and if not used properly, you really can get in a lot of trouble. We're not just talking about prescription stuff; we're talking about average household chemicals that you use within your home or that you use in cooking, in some cases.

I say again, there's a whole other issue around labelling. Yeah, I understand that for industry, this is a real leap, but I think we need to remember that industry, as society has progressed over the years, and things that industry would have thought were absolutely impossible 50 years ago when it comes to changing their way of doing things—in some cases, they had to be brought in kicking and screaming, but they'll be the first to turn around and say now, "That was the best thing we ever did."

I'll give you a quick little example. Again, I come out of the mining industry. When we, as steelworkers, suggested that there should be an Occupational Health and Safety Act that gave—can you believe—the right to refuse to a worker, that a worker could stand up in the plant by the force of law and say to his or her employer, "I refuse this work because it's unsafe," and have the legal right to do so, and if the employer retaliated, the worker had the right to be protected by the law—I remember when we did that some 30 years ago. I was one of the steelworkers who was working and advocating for that where I came from.

Employers were absolutely over the end. They were livid. They couldn't believe that steelworkers were out there talking about that. They got even madder when this Legislature started talking about it, and they really got peeved when the Legislature passed the legislation and every worker in province got the right to refuse. They said it was a calamity; it was going to be the end of industry as we know it, that we were going to have these shutdowns; nothing would operate any more because you couldn't trust those workers to have that kind of authority to refuse unsafe work.

Listen to the Ontario Mining Association today, listen to the Ontario Forest Industries Association today. They talk about safety. Those are the first words out of their lips, because they now understand a safer workplace means you spend less money. It's not only the most human thing to do as far as preventing injury to workers, but it's also a question of the bottom line. So I look at the mining industry today and I drive around plants across Ontario, and you see how many days are worked safe without an accident: "We're the safest of this, and we have a safe record here, and we've got a safe record there," because they finally understood that, yes, it was a leap of faith for them to accept that workers would have the right to refuse, but in the end, they saved money. Their workers' compensation premiums went down. They were not having the kind of problems in the workplace that disrupted the workplace as a result of accidents that were happening back then. Now we can boast in the mining industry that we're actually the safest industry. This is amazing. I can't believe it. I would have never said that 30 years ago, but mining is among the safest industries in Ontario to work with in the manufacturing process.

So, yes, it's a leap of faith if we decide to set goals of eliminating the use of toxins in plants, and, yes, it's going to be a tough thing to do, but it's doable. We've done it before, and I think we should not lose the opportunity to do what is right for workers, for families and for our environment in this province, and for business as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to comment on Bill 167 today, the Toxics Reduction Act. As we've been discussing, what this act would do is require businesses that use toxins to, first of all, inform their communities about what toxins are in use and then file a plan, which

would be public, that would outline how they're planning to reduce the toxins. That gives a great deal of flexibility, which is a good thing because in Ontario we have such a diverse province, such a diverse economy. It's very difficult to identify chemicals that are used in the mining industry versus forestry versus manufacturing in a whole host of forms, versus the service industry. Each of those industries has different issues, different products and different toxins that need to be reduced. What this does is allow each company to have a tailor-made bill.

But I think one of the other things that we're seeing today is the whole issue around a sustainable economy. In fact, we had in Guelph a few months ago a workshop on sustainable economy. One of the things that we looked at in those workshops, as we worked through the day and listened to various speakers, was the whole issue of the double bottom line and the notion that it's often useful for companies to look at their green footprint, their green bottom line. In fact, it's becoming more and more a case that companies that can present to the public a positive green bottom line, a plan to reduce their impact on the environment, are those that are becoming most profitable, because they have consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to enter the debate today on Bill 167, the Toxins Reduction Act, 2009. No doubt every member in this chamber, of course, understands that in this Legislature we need to be part of working on reducing the impact of toxins on people and our environment.

1730

I'm hopeful that the government, with this attempt, isn't resorting to duplication of what the federal government is already doing. As you know, the federal government has already developed what many in this world consider to be a world-class chemical management plan. It's referred to in an acronym called CMP, which is governed by the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, CEPA, and has a well-known approach to deciding what chemicals need to be assessed and a rapid and aggressive timetable for doing those assessments, and then developing regulations as required. So I'm just hopeful that in recognizing that we must adhere to the CMP, that we would further ensure that toxics identification for potential reductions is based on a sound science- and risk-based process. It is important that we avoid regulatory duplication and that we minimize any added costs in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for Timmins—James Bay, as he is wont to do, discussed the mining industry and some of the relevance for the mining industry of this proposed legislation, Bill 167. As we all work on this and strive for a piece of legislation and the regulation that follows, we strive for something that will be effective in reducing toxics. That will be a challenge for the mining industry and for the smelting industry. I don't know the

industry as well as the member for Timmins—James Bay, but how do you substitute some of the products that are used in mining as we accrue metal from the ground?

I am concerned that this may not be the way to go as far as the mining industry—and I ask northern Ontario to look well to this piece of legislation. Why on earth would we religiously follow a 20-year-old state of Massachusetts piece of legislation? Massachusetts, to my knowledge, does not have a mining industry. Twenty years ago, Massachusetts did not have a mining industry, when this law was written. However, we do know in the discussion paper that at a future date—and I'll just quote: "Given that the toxics used and generated by these facilities"—referring to mining—"at a future date ... a specialized approach to managing and mitigating those risks where appropriate" is being considered. I do have a concern with that.

Again, this legislation was written for a New England state. There's no mining there, and I don't know how you can apply that to northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the pleasure of participating in the discussions about Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act, 2009.

The introduction of this bill falls within the general policy of this government, where we have, for example, made commitments to eliminate production of electricity using coal, because coal produces toxic materials and introduces them into the environment. More recently, we passed a bill in this House banning smoking in cars where they have a child under 16 years old in the car. So these are toxic materials, and toxic materials, as the name implies, are toxic. They affect the health and safety of people.

In Ontario we have over 23,000 toxic materials that are used in various industries, and some of these toxic materials are carcinogens, meaning that they introduce and induct cancer. Other ones have other health effects. So the introduction of this bill is mainly directed to the fact that we want to protect the health and safety of Ontarians.

In reality, in Ontario we are one of the largest jurisdictions in North America and in this country, where we release more toxic materials, so we need to stop this basically. This is the right time to bring this bill together and pass it through this House to get these toxic materials banned in Ontario.

The technology is there today. In eliminating toxic materials, we can replace them with other chemicals which are not toxic, and this bill, if passed, will create research and development not only in academic institution but in industry as well. Therefore, it will create jobs for researchers and engineers who will bring up chemical with acceptable and approved health and safety aspects.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Timmins—James Bay has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thank all the members for commenting, but I would just hearken, on the last comment

that was just made now, that this legislation will cause all kinds of research to happen. There's not going to be any research happening if all you've got is legislation that says, "You've got to make a plan." What is the incentive to get the switch? How are you going to move people from using a toxic chemical to a less toxic chemical if you don't have a mechanism to say, "Our goal is to eliminate, over a period of time"—whatever toxins they might be? At the end of the day, I don't think just having a plan is going to do a whole lot towards reducing the emissions that we now have going into the atmosphere and into the environment.

I say again, the legislation is not a bad idea. I support the general concept, but I tell you, there's a real problem with legislation that says, "We don't know what we want to do once we have all this information." You're going to have these plans, with no goal about what you do with these plans once you find out what toxins people are using in industry. I understand this is a tough issue on both sides. For me as a consumer, I want to be protected. I want to make sure that I'm not getting sick as a result of being exposed to whatever. As a worker, you want to know the same thing. The company wants to know that whatever happens, they're going to be able to afford to do it and that it's not going to be an onerous financial burden on them. For the environmentalists, they understand just how important it is that we do this right.

I say to the government across the way: Okay, great. You've got a piece of legislation in the House. Good idea. I'll give you some support for that, but once you get this thing into committee, we've got to start figuring out what we want to achieve once this legislation is passed. If we're going to post plans that say, "Here are the toxins in industry," we need to then decide what we're going to do with those plans. Is the goal to eliminate some of the harmful toxins? Is the goal to replace them with other means, either different chemical or mechanical means? I don't know, but those are the questions we have to ask, and if we don't do that, we're giving this short shrift.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act, 2009. The member from Timmins-James Bay was raising some good questions, as were the other members on both sides of the House. This is why second reading debate is important. It got me to ask some questions of our researcher too. That helps me be better informed, because this is a complex issue.

One of the key things that the member from Timmins-James Bay should know is that as part of this commitment that we make in legislation, the government is also going to invest \$24 million to help Ontario's industries comply with new rules, transform their processes, find green chemistry alternatives and reduce the use of toxics in their operations. So there is a very proactive approach by government, along with the legislation, to help these industries develop a plan of how they would be able to audit what they use, how they would be able to get

information on alternative chemicals, perhaps, that aren't as harmful or to get away from certain chemicals that are harmful. So there is an inducement there through government partnership and this fund that's going to be set up to help industries comply.

The other thing that this legislation really depends on is public education, and that's education not only of the general public but of our industrial chemical producers. It asks them to propose a plan and monitoring of the chemicals they use and to put forth a strategy on how to reduce these chemicals, because right now, there is really no planned approach to this. Companies do it on an ad hoc basis, and some of the good companies are already doing it, but across the board, they're not doing it because, as the minister said, when it comes to toxic chemicals and the discharge and use of toxic chemicals, Ontario is one of the worst in North America.

1740

So I disagree with the Conservatives that we should do nothing. We have to do something. The federal government has their approach, but the problem with the federal government approach is that all they're doing is assessing 200 chemicals out of 23,000. They're not even going to eliminate the 200 chemicals; all they're going to do is assess 200 chemicals out of 23,000, and they're not going to complete the assessment federally until the year 2012. We can't wait on that very laissez-faire approach of the federal government when we know full well that we've got some pretty frightening cancer statistics in this country and province.

Despite the fact that so many breakthroughs have been made in the treatment of cancer and the new breakthrough drugs, the incredible research that has been done, the work by Cancer Care Ontario and the amount of dollars that are spent in treating cancer and educating people about cancer, the cancer rates in this province and in this country are still on the rise. Doesn't that give you a bit of a wake-up call to shake our heads here, that there's something wrong in the things we eat, in the air we breathe, in what's in our water? There's got to be something we're doing wrong, and I think we owe it to our children and we owe it to our grandchildren to make sure that we investigate every possible source of this growing epidemic of cancer.

How many hundreds of billions of dollars have we spent dealing with cancer in the last decade—\$100 billion, \$200 billion, maybe \$300 billion in North America? Yet cancer rates are still on the rise. That's why the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Care Ontario and these organizations that are very concerned about people's health are saying that we need to look at reducing toxins that are used in our daily lives. It's not as if this legislation tries to use a dictatorial approach to industry. These are suggested strategies; they're not even mandated. I know one of the criticisms made by the New Democratic Party is that it should be stronger and going further, to have these goals and specific criteria. But I don't think the laissez-faire approach of Conservatives is really going to be accepted by the public in Ontario.

We already saw what happened—just a small example; this bill doesn't deal with consumer products. We saw that product that they put in baby bottles—

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Bisphenol A.

Mr. Mike Colle: Bisphenol A. It was put in baby bottles and the lining of canned food. Those hard plastic bottles have got this cancer-causing agent, and flew off the shelves when mothers found out that this product could be harmful to children.

You can see why in the long run, it's not only beneficial to our children that these products are not produced with these hazardous chemicals but for the industry that's in the business of producing baby bottles or the lining for canned goods. If they knew that these chemicals were harmful—it's bad for the bottom line. That's the kind of education that is required to help business and to help industry get away from the use of these hazardous toxic materials that will not only contribute to people's ill health—it will also save them money, because they're not going to be selling too many baby bottles now. I know my daughter has gone to the glass bottles. We threw out all those plastic baby bottles. It scared the wits out of everybody.

This is an example of what happens when we don't have a thorough, comprehensive monitoring program, an education program, and an involvement by government and by scientists in monitoring the chemicals that are used in Ontario 24/7 in all kinds of industry. As I said, right now there's basically an ad hoc approach to this. We need a more systemic approach, and that's what this bill does. It sets a benchmark, it sets up a process of co-operative engagement of the industry so they can start to phase out some of these chemicals that perhaps, in the EU, in Europe, they found to be harmful; they're being withdrawn from many EU countries, and we should also be withdrawing them here, based on a process of education and partnership. That's what this bill sets up, as I said, even putting forth \$24 million to help industries comply with the new rules and the processes, which are not binding.

Now, you can imagine that many people would say that it should be obligatory and there should be strict rules and elimination. But at least we are setting up these protocols, which, according to the panel that was set up earlier last year, is the best approach, a co-operative partnership approach. That's what the minister has undertaken to do.

It's very obvious, too, that reducing reliance on toxics enables facilities to help reduce their business risks and business costs, by mitigating the need for mandatory pollution controls. If you use those killer chemicals, you're going to have to use all kinds of pollution controls and mitigating measures to control the pollutants, so it's going to cost you money. Then you've got to do all kinds of extra things, as the member from Timmins—James Bay was saying, in handling all these hazardous chemicals, which is going to cost you more. Then there are the remediation liabilities. The lawyers love this kind of stuff. Insurance costs, when you're using these chemi-

cals, go up—more money to the bottom line of the company. Not to mention—you know, I don't have to say the words “Love Canal.” We're not too far from what happened at Love Canal in Buffalo—a toxic soup in a whole section of that part of Buffalo because nobody was supervising or paying attention to the toxic chemicals being dumped into that canal for years and decades in Buffalo. We're not that far from that, and it wasn't too long ago that that happened.

So we are going to stand here and say, “Well, perhaps we shouldn't go this far, given this is a remote possibility in industry and the federal government is doing this plan to monitor 200 chemicals out of 23,000”? I don't think that's good enough. We have seen the suffering that occurred to our neighbours in the south when they weren't monitoring the use of these chemicals being dumped.

The member from Peterborough was talking about what happened in his region, in Peterborough, with the Trent Canal, with Canada Packers dumping all that waste into the—what's that lake called?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Little Lake.

Mr. Mike Colle: Little Lake, beautiful, pristine Little Lake on the Trent Canal system. That's because we didn't know better at that time. So now we have better information and we listen to the practical scientists who know what can be done.

I think there's mention here about one thing I was going to ask the minister. He mentioned the use of alternative green chemicals, and I thought, “That's maybe an oxymoron.” Is there such a thing as a green chemical? I don't know. But anyway, I'll ask him for an explanation.

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: Maybe organic worms or organic microbiotics or whatever—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, I think of worms eating up our household waste. Anyway, green chemicals—I don't quite understand that. I have to ask the minister about that.

I think what the minister was trying to say is, they're trying to have alternative chemicals that are not as harmful and not as toxic certainly as the ones we use. That's possible, because I think there's enough information that could be shared with our friends all over the world who are facing the same issues. As we know full well, Canada and Ontario are not alone in this incredible challenge that we have. I know that there are countries all over the world, again, faced with these same dire circumstances, and I think we need to work together internationally on this front, too.

1750

The other aspect of this bill which is very, very important is that in the long run it also tends toward greener industries, more sustainable industries, more sustainable practices, because that is what the public is demanding. The new standard is that there needs to be an investigation of using less harmful products in our industry and in everything that we do. As consumers, we obviously

have a role to play in that. We sometimes don't think of the consequences of consumer buying patterns, and that's why we have a role to play within it.

I know the minister has gone out of his way to produce a series of pieces of legislation which are, part and parcel, very compatible with what he's done here. We know that the source water protection act is critically important, the Greenbelt Protection Act—we had the proclamation just last week of the important Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act.

I don't know if they did this in Timmins-James Bay, but I can remember in downtown Toronto, on College and Grace, back in the 1950s, all the guys would have their 1957 Chevys and the 1952 Fords and they would be parking them on the side of the curb with two wheels up. The member from Timmins-James Bay wouldn't understand this, but I know the member from Peterborough understands this. You'd park with two wheels up on the sidewalk and you'd have two wheels down on the road. You'd say, "Well, what is that guy doing there?" The member from Haldimand-Norfolk probably knows, but he doesn't—no, he's from the farm. He wouldn't know this. You know what they were doing? They were doing oil changes, and the oil would be going down into the sewer, into the grate. This was done on Saturdays all over the city of Toronto. They'd undo the nut on the bottom. Mr. Rinaldi, an old car junkie from way back, knows. He probably did it back on Dufferin and Dupont, where he lived. And we didn't—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: Nobody even told us. We thought we were doing the proper thing for our cars. We couldn't afford an oil change. Going to a gas station for an oil change was quite prohibitive, so you'd go to Canadian Tire and get the oil and then get underneath and unscrew the bolt and let all the oil drip out into the sewer. There was no awareness about that. The general public just didn't have that kind of information. We were basically unaware of the fact that that oil ended up in Lake Ontario and that's where our drinking water came from. No wonder, by 1965, 1967, most of Lake Ontario became unswimmable. Back in the 1950s, you would swim at Sunnyside Beach, you would swim at Cherry Beach. You could go all summer long. People would be swimming and using that lake water. By the mid-1960s, you would not dare swim in Lake Ontario and you wouldn't go near the islands: Centre Island, Hanlan's Point, Ward's Island. You couldn't swim there because of all this dumping.

There used to be a lot of industry up and down the Don River. A lot of factories would be along the Don River and along the Humber River. There would be all kinds of industrial uses along those two rivers. They could be throwing auto parts, in fact—I remember because there's quite a steep incline, especially from the Humber—and waste from junk cars into the Humber River. The Humber River and the Don River were basically writeoffs. But in the 1980s and the 1990s, we came more attuned to the impact we had on our environment. In fact, if you go to the Humber River right

now—and the member from Timmins-James Bay has gone salmon fishing in Lake Ontario. He knows. He eats the salmon and he's done it for many years. You can catch, what, 30-pounders?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I got a 33-pounder.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Timmins-James Bay got a 33-pounder in Lake Ontario. You can eat the fish, catch the fish; in fact, if you go up the Humber River near James Gardens and Baby Point in September, you'll see 30-pound salmon making their way up the Humber River to spawn at the headwaters. That's the improvement that has occurred.

I know Florence McDowell and Madeleine McDowell and that family has had this incredible program to educate people about rejuvenating the Humber River valley, and it's coming back. The Don River is a little more difficult because there's not as much water flow and there's still difficulty. You're not going to see salmon in the Don River. Anyway, there certainly are salmon in the Humber River. Right in the middle of Toronto, you'll see, as I said, 30- to 40-pound salmon bravely trying to make it upriver to spawn. That's because of leadership, education and more information.

You may disagree with the philosophy of government intervening or regulating or doing this, but this is more than just government stepping in because government wants to. There's an imperative for government to do this, and the imperative is really a health one. This is the health of our citizens in all of our ridings, and we're all connected, whether it be those of us who have ridings in the city of Toronto, ridings along Lake Erie or Lake Ontario or the Trent River system. We depend on each other and each other's actions impact on our own people.

The government of Ontario is trying to put together—basically, this is like a massive, comprehensive education campaign in partnership with industry, and industry in the long run will benefit because there will be some cost reductions and there will be some more efficiencies. The time has come to do this, and hopefully we can, through debate in this committee—I know the member from Haldimand-Norfolk asked a good question about why it was only Massachusetts doing it. Those are the kinds of questions we should be looking at and examining to see if we can come up with a good piece of legislation so we'll know better, so industry will know better and be better informed. It's critical. Just look at our cities and our children and their need to have this done for their sake.

I'm just trying to say that it's something that is necessary. I don't think it's too onerous on industry, and it makes us all undertake a self-evaluation of how we should be doing things better and improving our environment. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands recessed until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
		Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Jerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Steve Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Ter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craiton
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

PCI Geomatics	
Mr. Reza Moridi.....	6275
Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital	
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6275
Ontario budget	
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6275
Taxation	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	6275
David Sackett	
Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis.....	6276
Armenian genocide anniversary	
Mr. Monte Kwinter	6276
Multiple sclerosis	
Mr. Joe Dickson	6276
Report, Ombudsman of Ontario	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6276

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6277
Motion agreed to	6277

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Police services	
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	6277
National Victims of Crime Awareness Week / Semaine nationale de sensibilisation aux victimes d'actes criminels	
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	6277
Minister's comments	
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6279
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6279
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6279
Police services	
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6279
National Victims of Crime Awareness Week	
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6280
Police services / National Victims of Crime Awareness Week	
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6280
James Snow	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6281
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	6282
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	6282
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	6282
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6283

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Pension plans	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	6283
Assistance to farmers	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	6284
Taxation	
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	6284
Protection for workers	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6284
Ontario budget	
Mr. John O'Toole	6284
Brantford Seniors Resource Centre	
Mr. Dave Levac.....	6285
Ontario budget	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	6285
Firearms control	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6285
Hospital funding	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6285
Protection for workers	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6285
Road safety	
Mr. John O'Toole	6286
Ontario budget	
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	6286
Pension plans	
Mr. John O'Toole	6286
Protection for workers	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6286

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Toxics Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 167, Mr. Gerretsen / Loi de 2009 sur la réduction des toxiques, projet de loi 167, M. Gerretsen	
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6287
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6290
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6291
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6291
Mr. Norm Miller.....	6291
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6292
Mr. Toby Barrett	6292
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	6299
Mr. Bob Delaney	6300
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6300
Mr. Dave Levac.....	6300
Mr. Toby Barrett	6301
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6301
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6304
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6304

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6304
Mr. Jeff Leal	6305
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6305
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	6305
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6309
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6309
Mr. Rick Johnson.....	6309
Mr. Norm Miller	6309
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	6310
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	6310
Mrs. Liz Sandals	6313
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	6314
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	6314
Mr. Reza Moridi	6314
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	6314
Mr. Mike Colle	6315
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	6317

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 27 April 2009 / Lundi 27 avril 2009

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	6263
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6263
Mr. Khalil Ramal	6263
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6263
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	6263
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6263
Hon. David Caplan.....	6263
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6263
Mr. Bruce Crozier	6263
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	6263
Mr. Dave Levac.....	6263
Mr. Mike Colle.....	6263
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6263
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6263
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6263
Mr. Wayne Arthurs	6263
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6263

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Tim Hudak	6264
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6264

Taxation

Mr. Tim Hudak	6264
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6265

Infectious disease control

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6265
Hon. David Caplan.....	6265

Infectious disease control

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6266
Hon. David Caplan.....	6266

Energy rates

Mr. John Yakabuski	6267
Hon. George Smitherman.....	6267

Employment standards

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6268
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6268

Rural and northern health services

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	6269
Hon. David Caplan.....	6269
Mr. Pat Hoy.....	6269

Travel industry

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6269
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	6269

Public transit

Mr. Rosario Marchese	6270
Hon. George Smitherman.....	6270

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6270
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	6270

Infectious disease control

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6271
Hon. David Caplan.....	6271

GO Transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6271
Hon. James J. Bradley	6271

Green power generation

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	6272
Hon. George Smitherman.....	6272

Children's mental health services

Mrs. Julia Munro	6272
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6273

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue	6273
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	6273

School boards

Mr. Dave Levac.....	6273
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6274

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Reza Moridi.....	6274
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6274

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mervin Dewasha

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	6274
-----------------------	------

Smooth Rock Falls Hospital / Hôpital de Smooth Rock Falls

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6274
-------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
X1
-023



No. 141

N° 141

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

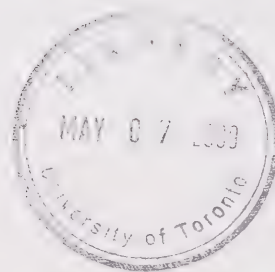
Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 28 April 2009

Mardi 28 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2

Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430

Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2

Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430

Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOXICS REDUCTION ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES TOXIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts / Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à promouvoir une réduction de l'utilisation et de la création de substances toxiques et à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this bill this morning. As you are well aware, this issue of toxic contamination, of the imposition of a toxic burden on people of this society, is one that's fundamental to the health and well-being of Ontarians. The issue of toxic chemicals and the need for a tough toxic chemical strategy cannot be emphasized strongly enough.

I have to say, before I go on to the substance of the bill, that one needs to look back at the history of other toxic substances and action that has been taken to deal with them and inaction in dealing with them. In the early and mid-1950s, a drug was produced in Germany called thalidomide. For those who are of my son's generation, this is not a drug that they're familiar with, but when I was much smaller, much younger, we heard about thalidomide and the fact that this drug that was produced to deal with morning sickness had a huge impact on women and their children. It led to birth defects that ruined people's lives. I remember as a paper boy in Hamilton in the early 1960s going to the door of a household—I was collecting their weekly payment for the Globe and Mail—and a boy came to the door who was a few years younger than me who had flippers for arms. He didn't have arms. That particular birth defect was a common one in the use of thalidomide. I don't know if that was what had happened to that child, but I'd seen enough and read enough, even in my pre-teen years, to know that this was one of the common occurrences.

So when we play with chemicals, when we work with chemicals that go into our bodies, there are a wide variety of impacts that those chemicals can have. We will talk about things today, in the course of this debate, that can be quite general and statistical. We can talk about broad principles, but in the end it comes down to direct human impact. It comes down to birth defects and cancer. It comes down to deaths that can be attributed to a variety of sources but are ultimately derived from exposure to toxic substances or toxic chemicals.

You are well aware of the impact that asbestos has had in this society over decades. In Sarnia—I was there last year talking to people about the toxic chemical impacts that they were dealing with and one that continued to have a legacy impact. Sarnia has been hit very hard by asbestos. A friend of mine there lost her father to asbestos exposure. That particular substance was not dealt with seriously. We drove down a road which on one side had had a fairly infamous industrial installation, and on the other side of the road was a high school. In its heyday, that factory, which did a lot of work with asbestos, released enough asbestos that you could see a cloud of it moving across the road. You could see the asbestos fibres settling down on the football field of that high school.

The reality of the impact of asbestos on human health took a long time to recognize and took a long time to generate action. In the meantime, many people lost their lives. When the argument was made that perhaps asbestos was a problem, those concerns were initially dismissed. But the companies that worked heavily with asbestos ultimately were saddled with huge liability costs for the impact that they imposed on human health and well-being.

My hope is that we will be dealing with legislation that will avoid the kinds of mistakes we've made in the past, where we've ignored clear signals of problems with human health and clear signals of problems with impact on the environment; and that we take action that is substantive, that allows for an orderly transition from one regime to another and that, frankly, gives us the opportunity to build the kind of economy that we're going to need in Ontario in the 21st century: one that is based on green energy and green chemistry.

Across Canada, over 23,000 chemicals and substances are used in manufacturing products that we use every single day of our lives. These are products such as building materials, toys, cars, food, medicine and entertainment products. We encounter the chemical compounds used in this kind of production and industry every day of our lives. Although these chemicals proliferate, we know

relatively little about them. Little data exists regarding their impact on human health or environmental health. However, increasingly, emerging research is starting to paint a concerning picture of the relationship between these toxins and the health outcomes of populations and the environment.

In 2006, a study examined human tissue samples in a number of Ontario families. The results of this study found 46 industrial chemicals in the bodies of these family members, substances like heavy metals, pesticides, PCBs and Teflon-related chemicals. We know that cancer, asthma, infertility, learning problems and birth defects are all being increasingly linked to our exposure to toxic chemicals. Especially when it comes to the health of our children, there is increased evidence of the need for action.

In the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's 2006 submission to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly regarding the Community Right to Know Act, the RNAO stated:

"Large margins of safety must be built in to accommodate for the much greater vulnerability of children to toxins, as they are exposed to more toxins per body weight; absorb ingested substances differently; have developed fewer protections against toxins; face additional risks while undergoing development; face higher exposures due to activity and behaviour; and have much longer to develop disease from toxins. In the case of toxins, a precautionary approach is appropriate."

0910

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario was speaking about the Community Right to Know Act, my private member's bill that came forward in 2007. Their words were applicable to that act or to any other legislation that needs to take on the whole issue of toxic chemical exposure in this society. There is no question that if you are concerned about the well-being, the life experience of young people, children in this society, that you have to, in your planning, take account of how they react differently to toxic chemicals and how the reality that they are still growing leaves greater scope for danger to their systems. We are talking about changing not only the potential for good health but also their behaviour and the potential to achieve in the world. We should be taking action that will be substantively shifting the exposure of this whole society to toxic chemicals.

When we look at this bill, when we evaluate this bill, we have to ask whether it will fulfill its set purpose of improving the health of Ontarians, improving the environment, and is this bill setting the high standard that the health of our children and the well-being of our children demands of us? We know that every day, the research making the connection between toxic chemicals and health outcomes grows. As we learn more about the complex interaction of lifetime exposures to chemical compounds in our biology and the interplay of genes in the environment, it's the precautionary principle that must take precedence.

Prior to the last election, Premier McGuinty was quoted on the Toxic Nation Environmental Defence web-

site commenting on the need for this kind of legislation. Mr. McGuinty commented on the need for "a tough new toxic reduction law and a carcinogen reduction strategy." He called for a plan that puts Ontario at the forefront in North America on tackling this issue. Well, his comments there were the right comments to make. Those commitments were the right commitments to make. That approach was the right approach to take. But the reality is that the bill before us doesn't live up to his commitments, his comments or the reality of the situation. It doesn't live up to the recommendations of the minister's toxics reduction scientific expert panel and the expert opinion of groups like the Canadian Environmental Law Association. It fails to live up to the expectations of the 90% of Ontarians who are concerned about this issue. That's a deep concern, because, as everyone knows, it isn't very often that legislation makes it to the floor of this Legislature. We deal with a lot of bills every day, but in the population of Ontario, of 13 million people, with tens of thousands of concerns, with a population that needs a broad range of issues addressed, the ability to actually address them here on the floor of this Legislature is quite compressed. There aren't that many opportunities to address any given issue. So when the opportunity presents itself to bring forward a bill and it falls short of the Premier's commitments, falls short of what people expect and falls short of what Ontario needs it is extraordinarily distressing—disturbing.

Let's look at the current toxic situation in Ontario. In North America, Ontario is second only to Texas in tonnes of toxic chemicals being released into the air, water and going to our landfill sites. That's an extraordinary thought. North America is a very big jurisdiction. There is a lot of industry on the eastern seaboard of the United States and there's a lot of industry in California. Texas is home to the petrochemical industry in the United States. We're second only to Texas.

We have a huge responsibility. The toxic chemicals that we dump into the water flow through the Great Lakes, down the St. Lawrence into Quebec. The toxic chemicals that we dump into the air are carried thousands of kilometres—some to the Arctic, some out to the east, some to the Atlantic. We have a responsibility not only to our own citizens, but to the environment generally, to actually get this right. Second only to Texas in the tonnes of toxic chemicals being released into air, water and going into our landfill sites: That is a huge responsibility and one that, as this bill is written at the moment, is not properly discharged. I'll go on to talk about the bill in greater detail. Just again, to note that being the second jurisdiction in North America for releasing toxic chemicals into the environment says that we have a huge responsibility.

In Ontario it's not only that our level of emissions are high; it's also that the kinds of toxins that are being released are of great concern. Ontario's use of cancer-causing and reproductive toxins is higher than jurisdictions with similar emission levels. In 2004, Ontario released three million kilograms of known or suspected

carcinogens into the province's air, including trichloroethylene, ethylbenzene, styrene and formaldehyde. Think about that: in 2004, three million kilograms of known or suspected cancer-causing chemicals. You're talking about an awful lot of toxic material. Three million kilograms over a decade is a few kilograms for everybody in the province. It's a lot.

What people thinking about this bill should consider is that we are putting substances into the air that we know cause cancer or we suspect cause cancer. That's one of the things that has always taken me aback about the regulatory regime here in Canada and Ontario. People think that if something causes cancer they're going to be protected from it by government, that it isn't going to be introduced into their food, their air, their water. But the reality is, we generally don't protect people against slow-acting poisons. If it kills you on the spot, generally speaking, we'll put in place a rule to deal with it. But if it's slow-acting, then we put millions of kilos of that into the environment on an annual basis and don't particularly act in an aggressive way to deal with it. I don't think that's a responsible approach; I don't think that's a defensible approach.

That record of three million kilograms of known or suspected cancer-causing chemicals that we dump into the province's air leaves Ontario as the fourth-highest emitter of cancer-causing chemicals in North America. Now, there are a lot of states in the US that are bigger, but still, we're the fourth-highest emitter of cancer-causing chemicals in North America. That is a record that we cannot be proud of.

When it comes to reproductive toxins, Ontario ranks even worse. We're the second-highest emitter of reproductive toxins, second only to Tennessee, releasing more than four million kilograms into the air in 2004. Ontario's industries account for 36% of the total Canadian discharges of what are called reportable chemicals into the air and 50% of the discharges into water. If you ever have an opportunity to go to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, around Tadoussac, the Saguenay Fjord, you'll be able to see a population of beluga whales that swim in those waters. They're gorgeous animals, and they have very high levels of toxic chemicals in their bodies. If their bodies wash up on shore, they have to be disposed of with care because there are so many toxic chemicals in those bodies. It affects their reproduction and causes tumours in the whales. That's not all Ontario, but Ontario contributes substantially to the toxic chemicals in the water that flow down the St. Lawrence, accumulate in the food chain and have that impact. It's having an impact on them. It's going to have an impact on all of the creatures that are higher up on the food chain, and we're pretty high up on the food chain.

0920

Years ago, studies were done about the flow of toxic chemicals into the Arctic. When you have toxic chemicals released into the air, they're carried aloft by wind currents. When they get to the north, if they're carried in water, that water precipitates out and falls. So his-

torically, there has been an ongoing problem in the north with contamination of lakes with mercury and with pesticides, chemicals that aren't generated in the northern economy. We are part of what causes that deposition of toxic chemicals in the Arctic. We have a responsibility to take them on, so it's good to have an opportunity to take a step forward. It's not clear at this point whether this act will actually give us that step forward. We have an opportunity to protect the health of future generations—not just an opportunity but a responsibility. We have a responsibility to lower a constantly rising cancer rate. The question again remains: Will the opportunity before us be fully realized? The reality is that, as this bill is written, it's filled with holes; it's filled with inadequacies. That is of great consequence to the people of this province and the people downwind from this province, the people downstream from this province. Bill 167 lacks the teeth necessary and fails to even define some of the most central objectives it purports to accomplish.

New Democrats strongly support effective government action when it comes to protecting the health of our environment and the health of Ontarians. We need a toxics reduction bill that has the strength needed to protect the people of this province. We are very concerned that this bill represents a wholly inadequate response to one of the most pressing and serious issues facing our generation and future generations.

I want to talk a bit about another area where you can see the direct impact of toxic chemicals. In Sarnia, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation has their reserve, their residence, located in the middle of a group of chemical production plants. A number of years ago it was noticed that in that population, the number of boys born every year had declined and the number of girls born increased. The reason for that was that many of the chemicals that are released into the environment masquerade as natural chemicals, hormones that we produce in our bodies that can direct the development of a fetus. I want to be accurate on this, and I'm not sure my memory of the precise mechanism is entirely there. I can say, simply, that exposure to those chemicals seems to have caused an imbalance in the birth ratios of male and female. That is of concern to those parents, and it's an indication of the impact of the chemicals on that population. When we talk about these issues, we need to understand that it's not just a question of numbers and broad concepts; it has an impact on families, on individuals and on communities that has a residue, that is a shaping force over generations.

I want to take some time to outline the failings of Bill 167 and contrast the gaps that are in it with the suggestions offered by groups such as the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and even the minister's Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel. I want to provide some context about the successes of other jurisdictions with similar bills and how Ontario's version is currently falling short. Frankly, there's no reason for Ontario's bill to fall short now or at the end of this legislative process.

First of all, I have to say that we in the New Democratic Party are tremendously concerned about the bare-bones nature of the bill. The bill provides a skeletal framework that fails to define the central aspects of the bill, including which facilities and toxic substances are to be regulated and the time period of implementation. These aspects are left to regulation to be defined at a later date. These are not minor details; these are central details to the effectiveness of this bill. These are not side issues; these define whether the bill will be effective or not effective. They are issues that don't require more research. What they need is a decision, politically, about where we're going to go, what direction we have to take as a society, and then setting in place the legislative framework, the enforcement framework, that will actually deliver the change that we need.

The ministry has been researching this issue for a year and has received exact and expert advice from leaders in the field, so why has the government chosen to leave so much off the table? Given the fact that there's so much absent in the bill, it makes it awfully hard to offer a solid critique to comment on the specific oversights and suggested changes. The fact that the government has chosen to leave so much undefined is of great concern. The fact that they're playing politics rather than dedicating their energy to creating the toughest legislation possible, the most practical legislation possible, is a great disappointment to Ontarians.

We're working from the assumption that many of the regulations will follow the contents and procedures worked out in the Ministry of the Environment's 2008 discussion paper. We'd, of course, like to be basing our analysis on the contents of the bill, but the government has made that impossible, because when you read the bill, it is overwhelmingly enabling legislation rather than prescriptive and directive legislation. We will have a lot to say about what's in the bill itself, but the omissions, at this point, are as important as what is actually put in place.

I want to start with the very beginning of the bill, the stated purpose of the bill, and that, in and of itself, is of concern to those who are concerned about reducing the exposure of people in this province and in neighbouring jurisdictions to toxic chemicals. Bill 167 reads:

"The purposes of" the bill "are,

"(a) to prevent pollution and protect human health and the environment by reducing the use and creation of toxic substances; and

"(b) to inform Ontarians about toxic substances."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association, CELA, a public interest group whose purpose is to use and improve laws to protect public health and the environment, provided the Ministry of the Environment with a model bill during the Ministry of the Environment's consultation process on this issue. The model bill that CELA drafted provides a stark contrast to Bill 167. In this model bill, a multi-pronged and significantly expanded purpose section could be found. It reads:

"(1) protect human health and the environment by reducing the use of toxic substances;

"(2) promote the use of safer alternatives to such substances;

"(3) recognize the public right to know the identity and amounts of toxic substances in their community from various facilities; and

"(4) apply the precautionary principle and principles of sustainable development to these issues."

Of these four principles, only the first is included in Bill 167. So we can say that even right from the very start, when the direction of the bill itself is being set out, the scope of action, the scope of steps that are to be taken, is far too limited—far less than what has been recommended; far less, frankly, than what we need; and far less than what is politically possible.

I want to just note here this fourth point: "apply the precautionary principle and principles of sustainable development to these issues." For those who were around for the tainted blood scandal, when Canadians were infected with AIDS, with hepatitis, who saw the report of the Krever commission afterwards, who understood in concrete terms that when you're dealing with human health, when you're dealing with substances and risks to the population that are of consequence, one should approach these things with caution. Krever was clear in his report about the need to be looking out for what's going on there, to be willing to act to protect human health when the direction that evidence took you was to see that there was a substantial potential for a problem here.

0930

That's not in this bill. That's an error on the part of the minister in what he has put forward for this bill. When we're dealing with chemicals that we know cause cancer and we continue to release them into the environment in their millions of kilograms, when we know that we're dealing with chemicals that in their millions of kilograms cause reproductive problems, then, frankly, one does need to take a precautionary approach. One does need to say, "You know, human health could be getting compromised here. We should be acting."

The purpose of the bill that was put forward by CELA and not incorporated into the act was promoting the use of safer alternatives to such substances.

There's an opportunity here to take on the 21st-century shift in our economy. Green chemistry is going to be part of what happens in this century. We've missed the boat in the past.

I had an interesting discussion with my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River, Howard Hampton, about the plants, the industry, the machinery used to bleach paper. Ontario did not go far enough when it brought in regulations on bleaching paper to move chlorine out of the process. Nordic countries in fact did go further: They went to oxygen bleaching. The world's production of that machinery is now dominated by those jurisdictions that set the higher bar.

If we are not, in fact, thinking in this act about protecting human health and at the same time transforming our economy, we miss out on a huge opportunity. That is

a mistake on the part of the minister who brought forward this bill. He should be thinking about, and should in practical terms be moving forward, an agenda that causes a transition in our economy, from the unsustainable habits of the 20th century to what is going to have to be a far more sustainable economy in the 21st.

Again, of these four principles, only the first is included in Bill 167. The failures of the bill start at the very beginning and unfortunately characterize what we find throughout the bill.

Targets: Bill 167 sets no targets for toxics reduction and benchmarks regarding the success of this initiative. If you don't have targets and you don't have benchmarks, how is a government held accountable for whether or not the bill is successful? If, five or 10 years from now, the reductions are in the range of 5% or 10%, which would be wholly inadequate, what does the minister of the day say to the question, "Was this bill successful?": "Well, there was some reduction?"

You have to have targets, you have to have timelines if you're actually going to get anywhere, and we learned that from the whole process of fighting climate change. The initial global treaty written on climate change didn't set targets and timelines, and nothing happened coming out of that process. We went to the Kyoto Protocol, which, for all its weaknesses, at least set targets and timelines so governments could be held to account by their populations if they so desired. It matters to give that sort of framework so that governments and legislators can be held accountable for what they do and don't do.

In any event, Bill 167 sets no targets for toxics reduction and benchmarks regarding the success of this initiative. In the ministry-created Toxic Reduction Scientific Expert Panel, the recommendation for targets is made twice.

On July 23, 2008, in a memorandum to the environment minister, the expert panel states: "Ontario's pollution prevention legislation should:

"Include clear, viable, and progressive goals (i.e. a percentage reduction in toxics use and release in the province within a specified period of time); the statute should include renewable toxics reduction targets, and a mechanism for monitoring and public reporting on achievement of those targets. The panel notes that goals are not set in the current discussion paper ... and program."

Ontario's failure to create a set of targets for toxics reduction contravenes the most successful of toxics reduction legislation, like that in Massachusetts. By failing to create targets, Bill 167 is also ignoring the advice of CELA, which recommended a 50% reduction in releases and a 20% reduction in use within five years of the first mandated reporting period.

I have to ask myself: How serious is the government about this initiative if there are no targets? Is this simply a public relations exercise? Will we ever be able to hold the government to account on this bill if there is no target set? Will any bureaucrat say, "I've got to move things forward this year because we're nowhere near the targets

that we have to meet"? It is a mistake in terms of legislation, and it is a mistake in terms of public accountability to put forward legislation like this that doesn't have targets.

Anyone who runs a business knows there are targets every year to be met in order to achieve the goals of that business. If you want to have a bottom line that shows something positive at the end of the year, you have to set targets throughout your process of planning. You have to work to those targets. You have to provide people with incentives for those targets. You have to provide people with punishments for not reaching the targets. That is a very simple thing, and it is missing in this legislation.

Sectors affected by the bill: No particular sectors are defined in Bill 167. We're going to have to go back and assume that the Ministry of the Environment's 2008 discussion paper will form the basis for content. For the moment, that's all we can do. If indeed that is the case, then there are concerns here—substantial concerns.

The Ministry of the Environment's discussion paper identified two sectors to be affected by toxics reduction: manufacturing and mineral processing. I have no doubt that those two sectors need action on reduction of toxic chemicals. But that's it. What's absent here are waste treatment plants and energy generating plants, which are some of the highest emitters of toxic substances. There doesn't seem to me to be sound reasoning in restricting it to two sectors rather than aiming a toxics reduction strategy at any facility that is endangering the health of Ontarians through the release of a reportable substance.

Other jurisdictions have done better, and so should Ontario. The fact of the matter is that with only two sectors likely to be included in the bill, Ontarians would continue to face many risks from hazardous substances. Bill 167 should be amended to include, at a minimum, all sectors that report to the federal National Pollutant Release Inventory, NPRI: manufacturing, mining, forestry, electric utilities, hazardous waste treatment and solvent recovery facilities, chemical wholesalers, petroleum bulk terminals, the oil and gas sector, sewage treatment plants and incinerators. Legislating mandatory reporting when it comes to these sectors would stand a chance in making a significant impact on toxics reduction in Ontario.

We have a bill so far that is narrow in the scope of action that's going to be taken, that doesn't have targets for the amount of reduction that's actually going to happen, and that, within the whole broad sweep of industrial activity in Ontario, may deal with two sectors, given the discussion paper, which is all we have to go on in the moment about what sectors may be included.

0940

Those problems alone are quite substantial in terms of the viability, the effectiveness of this bill, but then we have to look at the substances that will actually be regulated, for to assume that the substances to be regulated will follow the Minister of the Environment's discussion paper—New Democrats have their concerns.

In this discussion paper there are four categories of toxics divided into four schedules. Currently, the federal

National Pollutant Release Inventory requires reporting on the pollutant releases, disposals and transfers of 320 substances of concern. The first schedule contains 45 National Pollutant Release Inventory chemicals that have been identified as priority toxic chemicals—ones that we should be paying far more attention to and acting on. This first schedule is set to become the first phase-in of Bill 167, with requirements for materials accounting, toxics reduction planning and reporting by 2010 to 2012. The first phase-in would also include schedule 3. However, schedule 3 would only be subject to reporting and not include a mandate for a toxics reduction planning strategy. Included in schedule 3 are 20 priority non-NPRI toxics. However, the action on these so-called priority toxics is weak at best.

The second schedule contains an additional 275 substances, and this would maybe be phased in by 2014 or 2016. These 275 substances make up the rest of the chemicals that must be reported by the National Pollutant Release Inventory. The discussion paper states that the phase-in of schedule 2 would be dependent on further consultation.

Schedule 4, finally, contains 135 non-National Pollutant Release Inventory substances. According to the Ministry of the Environment's discussion paper, the schedule 4 chemicals "are classified as reproductive toxics, neurotoxins and mutagens"—what's a mutagen? A chemical agent that changes genetic material, our DNA—"as well as carcinogens," cancer-causing chemicals. When is schedule 4 set to be phased-in? Well, the short answer is, perhaps never.

The discussion paper states: "This list is not proposed to be subject to legislative requirements at this time. However, the ministry proposes to examine the substances in the schedule and would consider whether any actions should be taken to address them over time." This approach has got to be of concern to Ontarians. Ontarians want to see action taken on toxic chemicals, and they want to see it now. To act in the manner that I've just described is a clear-cut refusal to act on the precautionary principle that the health of humans and the environment should be coming first.

Why is it that this government has not set the bar higher than the federal reporting standards, given that the implementation of reduction plans are not mandatory? If the reduction plans aren't mandatory, why don't you have a broader net to deal with the broader range of toxic chemicals? It looks like it's entirely possible that schedule 4 chemicals will never be phased in.

It's worth quoting the CELA assessment of this at length, as discussion in their submissions to the Ministry of the Environment's discussion paper:

"Quite simply, too few substances (45 NPRI substances under the proposed schedule 1) are designated for immediate action (i.e., in phase 1 as defined by the Ministry of the Environment). The 45 substances represent just 14% of the total number of substances (320) that currently are subject to the National Pollutant Release Inventory. Moreover, the 45 substances represent just

1.5% of the total annual tonnage of emissions of NPRI-reportable chemicals for the two industrial sectors (manufacturing and mineral processing) that MOE does propose to address under the new legislation (11,000 tonnes out of 717,000 tonnes). That percentage drops to about 1% of the total annual tonnage of emissions of the National Pollutant Release Inventory-reportable chemicals when one includes the other sectors covered by NPRI that the Ministry of the Environment does not propose to address under the new legislation."

We have a limited scope in the bill itself. We don't have targets. We talk about only a small part of the total sector that deals with toxic chemicals and then we deal with a small percentage of the toxic chemicals themselves. This may well be the incredible shrinking bill that we witness as we go through this process.

Ontarians deserve better legislation than a mere 1% reduction in toxic substance emission by 2012. When you're putting three million kilograms of known and suspected cancer-causing chemicals and four million kilograms of reproductive toxic chemicals into the environment, you would think that we would be shooting for a much higher target than 1%. The federal regulation should be a base that Ontario adopts and a base which becomes the starting point of increased reporting and, hopefully, a reduction schedule.

Fees and funds: How are we going to make all this happen? How are you going to pay for the enforcement? How are you going to pay for the research? How are you going to fund the transition from one process of manufacturing that uses toxic chemicals to one that uses green chemicals? Bill 167 fails to create a fund and doesn't impose fees on the regulated businesses, and that's a mistake. The minister's Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel had the following to say about this issue, and this is from their December 31 memorandum to the Minister of the Environment: that the "TUR [toxic use reduction] strategy be funded by fees levied on the regulated community, recognizing the cost-saving potential of efficiencies discovered through the toxics use reduction planning required by the TUR legislation."

The absence of a fee structure and the creation of a fund has grave implications for the success of this strategy. Without this ongoing funding, the ministry is putting itself in a position where toxics reduction strategy is designed to fail. A process like this, one that requires expertise, oversight, research, planning etc., requires ongoing financial resources.

Currently, there's \$40 million earmarked for this strategy over a four-year period. That, \$10 million a year, is not going to be enough to provide adequate resources to the industries that need it. It will not be enough to keep the public informed. It will not be enough to see the success of this strategy realized.

If we look to Massachusetts, a state that has experienced great success—"success" defined as a reduction in toxic chemical use of 41%, reduction in toxic waste by 65%, on-site release reduced by 91% and reduction in toxic chemicals and products shipped by 58%, between

1990-2004—with its now 20-year-old Toxics Use Reduction Act, we can see the importance of instituting fees. Massachusetts levies an annual fee on companies that are required to report. This fee is on a sliding scale determined by the number of employees and the number of reportable chemicals. These fees fund a permanent institute that provides technical support, expertise in pollution prevention, research training and public awareness. The institute also trains toxics use reduction planners. The Toxics Use Reduction Act legislation established this institute, set up at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

In addition to this university-based institute, the Toxics Use Reduction Act also created the Office of Technical Assistance and Technology for toxics use reduction, the OTA. The OTA is a non-regulatory office located within the Massachusetts state government that offers free technical support and guidance to industries to help them meet their legislative obligations.

Extensive studies have been carried out on the Massachusetts experience. A study of the costs and benefits of the program found that between 1990 and 1997, the costs of implementing the program were \$77 million and the benefits were \$91 million over the eight-year period. Participating companies saved more than \$88 million in operating costs. Overall, state industries saved \$14 million. That's a lot of money. That makes a difference in terms of the viability of companies; it makes a difference in terms of the cash available to them to invest in productive areas; it makes a difference in the terms of the cash available to them to pay their employees and make sure they have adequate benefits and paid vacations. So \$14 million is of consequence.

That is the kind of legislative impact that we need to see here in Ontario. We need to see those cost reductions; we need to see those chemical use reductions. The benefits just listed in terms of dollars don't include the human health, environmental and worker benefits of reduced toxic exposure and increased health outcomes. There is clear benefit to having in place a more effective act. Massachusetts has shown that there is a clear benefit. Their business community has had an improvement of their financial situation out of this. Their workers have had an improvement in their situation out of this. Why do we not at least come up to their standard?

0950

Next issue: mandatory substitution of safer alternatives. Although toxics reduction legislation in Massachusetts has been updated to ensure that when safer substances exist, their substitution for the more hazardous chemicals is mandatory, Ontario has chosen to ignore this best practice. Why would you do that? Why would you not at least put in place that where a substance is available that is non-toxic, that does the same job and can replace the toxic chemical, why would you not mandate that you replace the toxic chemical with the non-toxic one? It makes sense. It makes sense in terms of creating the market in Ontario for green chemicals; it makes sense in Ontario in terms of reducing the impact on people's

individual health, the health of the population as a whole. We have, as I said earlier, three million kilos of known and suspected cancer-causing substances that we dump into the air every year and four million kilos of reproductive toxins that we dump into the air every year. Why wouldn't you mandate that, when a viable substitute is available, you replace the toxic chemical with the non-toxic? That makes a lot of sense, but we don't have it; Massachusetts does.

Bill 167 chooses to ignore the issue of safe alternative substitution. CELA, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, notes, "It appears that the province hopes that safer alternative substitution will occur as a result of the regulated community seeing the benefits thereof, not as a result of legal requirements to do so." CELA goes on to discuss how, in this day and age, after the experience and actions of states like Massachusetts, it is inexcusable that Ontario would not institute a mandatory substitution regime. They are right. It's inexcusable, and it's staggering. Why would you not act? We're not saying that you should shut down your production; we're just saying that you should clean up your production.

Thresholds: The thresholds defined in Bill 167 are actually defined in this bill, as we are told that Bill 167 will apply to facilities that (1) employ more than the number of employees specified by regulations or (2) use or create more than the quantity of a prescribed toxic substance set out in the regulations. Of course, we don't know what these regulations are, so it's very difficult for us to knowledgeably comment on whether these thresholds will be useful or not useful, extensive enough or far too narrow. However, we do have the discussion paper the Ministry of the Environment put out, the regulations set out in their discussion paper. These thresholds will follow the federal National Pollutant Release Inventory program, and that is a mistake. The minister's Toxics Reduction Scientific Expert Panel had this to say about copying the National Pollutant Release Inventory thresholds:

"On the issue of regulatory thresholds, the panel notes that the current proposal incorporates the thresholds as set out in the NPRI. Although the NPRI is a well-known reporting mechanism, MEO emissions modelling and assessments indicate that there are numerous NPRI chemicals for which point source (reporting facility) form only a small portion of total estimated provincial emissions. Area estimates (from small and medium emitters based on densities of certain type of businesses in a regional area) in some cases form a high percentage of the emissions." And I'll emphasize what they had to say: "As a result, the panel recommends implementing pollution prevention obligations to facilities with lower thresholds than NPRI for certain substances."

Once again, the government has chosen to set the bar too low, is ignoring its own expert panel and is not putting in place the sort of tough legislation that was promised by the Premier when he was talking, prior to the election, about the need for action on toxic chemicals.

Next issue: conflict with municipal bylaws. Bill 167 is silent on the issue of conflict with municipal bylaws. We

don't know what would happen in the case of a judicial challenge of bylaws that have stronger regulations than those contained in this legislation. That's something that needs to be addressed by the minister and needs to be addressed through this legislation.

As members of this House well know, the city of Toronto recently passed a toxics right-to-know bylaw. Without the explicit addressing of this issue, the government is leaving Ontarians to deal with legal challenges on the basis that the provincial legislation supersedes any municipal act. That needs to be addressed in the bill. Hopefully, it will be addressed in amendments.

Public right to know: Although Bill 167 includes basic provisions for keeping the public informed about parts of the mandatory reporting of affected sectors, this reporting is grossly insufficient when it comes to the public having any abilities to ensure compliance.

CELA notes in their responses to the 2008 Ministry of the Environment discussion paper: "Furthermore, the discussion paper is silent on the right of members of the public to request that the minister review an industrial facility's toxics use reduction plan or (as we recommend in the CELA model bill) substitution implementation plan to determine if they comply with the act's requirements."

CELA also notes the absence of provisions that would allow a member or members of the public to resort to the courts if the government does not act.

The fact of the matter is that this bill not only fails to include mandatory compliance with the toxics reduction plans that affected facilities must create, but they don't even include provisions to protect any of the teeth that this act does have. Once again, we're left wondering why this government has failed to create a toxics reduction strategy that will have the impact that it has to have.

Let's look at the lessons from other jurisdictions. We have an advantage in Ontario in setting our toxics reduction legislation. We have a broad range of research and best practices developed from more than two decades of toxics reduction legislation in other North American and European jurisdictions.

Take Massachusetts, which I referred to earlier. They have their Toxics Use Reduction Act, which set the standard which we should, at a minimum, be meeting or, hopefully, surpassing. Their legislation was introduced in 1989, and since then, the following has been achieved: 41% reduction in toxic chemical use, 65% reduction in toxic waste, 91% reduction in on-site release, and 58% reduction in toxic chemicals in products shipped out of state. All of this occurred between 1990 and 2004.

The reality is that Ontario is set to introduce a toxics reduction strategy that would place us at the bottom of the barrel when compared to other jurisdictions that are taking the action that needs to be taken.

When we look at the REACH legislation in Europe—their reporting, education and research on toxic chemicals—it is far ahead of anything that we're doing here.

What's being done in other jurisdictions means better environmental health, better health for human popula-

tions, lower disease rates and lower hazardous exposure for the workers in these facilities. It means cost savings and a contribution to the knowledge economy, a green industry and green chemistry. It means an industrial sector that stands to gain by reducing the release of toxic chemicals.

I've covered a fair amount of ground in the past almost hour. I want to draw some conclusions out.

First of all, rather than demonstrating a leadership role in toxics reduction, the McGuinty plan for a toxics reduction strategy falls short. Prior to the last election, Premier McGuinty was quoted on the Toxic Nation Environmental Defence website, commenting on the need for this kind of legislation, "a tough new toxic reduction law and a carcinogen reduction strategy. Our plan puts Ontario at the forefront in North America on tackling this issue." Well, it's very clear today that Bill 167 doesn't deliver on this promise. Bill 167, according to the experts, is not the toughest in North America; that's clear. Instead, it's a great disappointment for those of us who are ready for strong and decisive action, action that would truly lead North America.

1000

Bill 167 fails to live up to the standards set by jurisdictions that have already demonstrated success. What we have before us is a bill that's bare-boned and grossly deficient in detail, and what details we can conclude, we can infer, in terms of what will form the content of Bill 167 once the regulations have been set, at this point leave us sorely disappointed. Ontario has failed to raise the bar on one of the most pressing issues facing Ontarians. Ontarians are being told that action on reducing toxic exposures will not be mandatory and that the reporting measures will keep the bar at the same level already imposed by the federal National Pollutant Release Inventory program.

New Democrats believe in a strong toxics reduction strategy. We look forward to this bill going to the committee and to the amendment stage, where the bill has the possibility of being strengthened—and it needs to be strengthened. We have gone through the weaknesses in the bill. If the government is listening to the population, if it takes the opportunity to go back to the recommendations of the expert panel, if it listens to organizations like the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the United Steelworkers and if it listens to the environmental groups that are out there pushing hard for reduction in the use of toxins, then they will go back to this bill and, in the course of hearings and in the course of amendments, substantially strengthen it.

People in Ontario deserve a bill that is substantially stronger, and it is our intention in the NDP to fight for a bill that is substantially stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning and to follow the remarks of the member from Toronto-Danforth, who actually had some substance to his remarks. I compliment him for that.

Yesterday, from the same party, we had a lot of questions but not many answers from the member from Trinity-Spadina. The member today, I think, showed a good grasp of the issue.

Some things, though, that I would like to correct and that certainly, I think, run on the same road on this bill—some members of the opposition think it goes too far and others think it doesn't go far enough. At the end of the day, it probably does exactly what it's intended to do at this point in time. But I want to clear up any misconceptions that the bill is going to override the Toronto bylaw. They're complementary bills, very different bills, but they do complement each other. We have the agreement of the Toronto Environmental Alliance on that. So the point that perhaps these two are at odds with each other I don't think, upon analysis, proves to be accurate.

They talk about setting targets as well. I suppose you could set targets now. When you're drafting a bill, you've got the ability to do anything you want, put it before the floor of the House and see what they think. It seems to me that this would be an unwise time to set those targets. Do I agree that targets should be set at some point in this process? Personally, I would agree with that approach. Is this the time to set them? I don't think so. I think right now we'd be setting what we would be deeming as arbitrary targets. I think you can take a look at the data that comes in from the first round of the process that we're suggesting should be set up and then, perhaps, you can look at targets. You'll know that you'll be basing the targets on some realistic assumptions and on some hard data that includes information that comes directly from industry within the province of Ontario.

The expert panels that we've had in Ontario have proven to us, shown us the evidence that the Massachusetts model has worked in the past. A lot of this bill is based on that model. I suspect it's a wonderful first step that's going to work in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, there has been a discussion of targets this morning, and I appreciate the hour done by the member for Toronto-Danforth, the environment critic for the third party.

Targets are important. We do have to go beyond merely filling out the forms.

As far as implementing and reaching some of these goals, many companies and businesses can continue to move forward on that front. But there are other enterprises that would have difficulty as far as actually accounting for or assessing what's going through their process and filling out these mandatory forms. It can be very complicated for certain industrial processes. I think of oil refineries, for example. That would be very challenging. It would be work-intensive to do an accounting of every individual toxic substance that comes through the main pipeline and contained within the crude oil. By the same token, to try to analyze crude oil coming out of an oilfield near Petrolia or down Leamington way, as

with Alberta—the product is there. Ideally it's contained within vessels, it's contained within tanks and pipelines, but is it really necessary to analyze day by day the toxic substances in crude oil once it comes into a refinery? It's contained within the lines; it's contained within the various tanks. Is it necessary to report on the toxic substances that are contained? They're not being released unless there is some kind of emergency spill or a blowout, but why go to this trouble when something is contained, and how can you document that in the day-by-day refining process anyway?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the honourable member for Toronto-Danforth for almost an hour, speaking about Bill 167, toxic waste reduction in Ontario. I heard him saying that the threshold is low and there's a limited scope and not providing people, including sectors—not setting up targets, and overriding the bylaws and federal jurisdictions, and many different issues.

I don't agree with the honourable member. I know of his opposition to this bill. He thinks this bill does not go far enough to deal with toxic waste in the province of Ontario. I disagree with him because I know that the Minister of the Environment and the leadership of our minister went far and wide in the province. I'll give you an example in my riding of London-Fanshawe. There is a big, huge project under way right to clean up the PCB sites in London. I think the cost is going to be huge, because we believe strongly that our environment should be clean, our communities should be clean and we should take the leadership in this matter.

I know it doesn't matter what you do in this life; you cannot do it all in one shot. You have to go step by step. You have to discuss it with your partners in communities. You have to take into consideration many different elements: the companies, factories and jurisdictions. It's all important to us. That's why the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of the Environment, the member for Oakville, mentioned that targets should be set—it may be that it's too early right now to set them up—before you go far and deep and consult and see what you can include in your target.

He mentioned that we're not doing enough in comparison to different jurisdictions—I think one in the United States—but he never mentioned any provinces in Canada. I think we are the leader in this country. I think the Premier set the bar very high because he believes strongly in a clean environment and in protecting our communities across the province of Ontario by introducing a strong bill to protect our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm always pleased to respond to the member for Toronto-Danforth. We talked about the bill yesterday. I know the minister spoke yesterday, and the parliamentary assistant, and there was general agreement on it, but the really serious content questions were

raised by our opposition critic, Mr. Barrett. As well, on this side we believe that there is not the right consistency in the legislation when working in harmonization with the federal government. Let's be very clear. What we're saying here is this: This was part of our campaign platform, so we take this issue of toxic materials very seriously. The federal government has shown leadership on this issue as well.

We see the implications for the economy at the time and we see in this bill, under sections 45 and 46, a couple of sections that are really riddled with red tape. What they're not doing is getting it right. So we're trying to make the point here—and I'm sure the member, who has an illustrious career with Greenpeace in the past, wants also to support this bill. But getting it right is what the debate is about. Getting it right means that certainly we should have consistency between jurisdictions. You wouldn't want to have a national plan where Ontario had a separate set of rules or a separate set of forms for reporting or for reviewing materials that could be coming from other jurisdictions. So let's get it right and let's work with the national plan. Let's make sure that there are standards that are achievable and methods of getting there.

This isn't new territory. Working in industry, as I have for 30-plus years, there was already a regime of reporting materials that was in use, either for cleaning or part of the process. This was called the WHMIS discipline. There were MSD sheets which defined the component and constituent parts. That information was shared, and that's a foundation to move forward with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Oakville, Haldimand–Norfolk, London–Fanshawe and Durham for their comments.

I think I'm going to focus on the comments from the member from Oakville and the whole question of setting targets. I believe that this government could look at jurisdictions across North America and could look at industrial jurisdictions in Europe. They could, before they presented this bill—maybe even now, in the next month or so—benchmark what's possible in advanced industrial societies and look at what's common in terms of the chemicals that are used, look at the commonality in industrial purpose and industrial activity and come forward with a target that would be achievable and that would allow this government and subsequent governments to be held accountable for action or lack of it.

I don't think it's a question for waiting for data from industry after we've brought forward an act; it's a question of saying: "This is where we want to go as a society. These are the cleanups that have to happen. This is the approach that we're going to take, and it is going to be one of substance." To bring forward and to try and move through a bill that doesn't have those targets undermines the government's credibility when it says

that it's going to be tough and innovative. It has to say where it wants to go. That is critical.

I'm pleased that he's been on the record saying that this act will not in any way override the city of Toronto's legislation, but I have to say to him that I've seen court challenges before in areas where the legislation has not been clear enough, and it would be very useful to have within the legislation an explicit statement that it doesn't override municipal bylaws that set a higher standard than is put in the legislation itself.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 10:15, this House is in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome Natalie Bellehumeur and Guy Faucher, who are the parents of Myriam Faucher, one of our pages, who's the page captain today. They're here from North Bay visiting.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome the grade 10 students from Father Michael McGivney Catholic Academy. They will be joining us in the public gallery later today.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'd like to introduce William Webber, a former student of mine and a recent honours graduate in the social science program at Ottawa U. This fall, he'll be studying for a law degree at the University of Ottawa. Welcome, William.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I ask for unanimous consent that we can wear the yellow and black ribbon to recognize the Day of Mourning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce in advance—I don't think they're here yet—12 students from Westdale Secondary School, accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Krista Levely. They're part of the Equal Voice Experiences program, which attempts to match young high school students with members of Parliament, current and former.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Newmarket–Aurora and page Cooper Toogood, I'd like to welcome his mother, Patti; his brother Rhys; his sister Katie; his grandmother Sandra; his grandfather Hal; and his principal, Bob Sandiford. All will be here at Queen's Park today. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. There has been much discussion at all levels with respect to the concerns stemming from the global outbreak of swine flu, with cases that are appearing

throughout the world—and we're hearing of cases being monitored here in Ontario. Ontarians have a legitimate right to be somewhat concerned. I think we can all agree that this isn't a partisan matter. Would you tell us who is it that you and/or your Minister of Health are speaking with at the federal level and what discussions are taking place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, and I'm very grateful for the tone as well. I think that the leader of the official opposition is absolutely right that this calls for all of us to be at our very best and to rise above differences which may not be that meaningful to Ontarians.

Let me say at the outset that there is a cause for concern, it is real, but I think it's not a cause for undue alarm, and I think we're always at our best when we approach these things in a calm and thoughtful way.

I want to take the opportunity, first, to assure families and reassure families that we have drawn all the lessons that we might from our experience here in 2003 at the time of SARS. We have more resources, more expertise, more technology and more protocols, and we have in place a very solid plan that helps us deal with these kinds of new strains, which, sadly, are a part of our modern reality. I just want to assure families that we are on top of this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My colleague and the opposition health critic yesterday questioned the Minister of Health on this same matter in light of the fact that not all public health units in Ontario have local plans in place and not all units have permanent medical officers of health. It's also important to point out that in short order, Ontario will have a new chief medical officer of health. I think it's fair to say that there's going to be a period of transition when that occurs. Ontarians deserve to know that protocols and functions are in place and ready to go if there's a need.

Premier, you were asked this morning in a scrum about agricultural workers, who are vital to many sectors of that industry. Could you advise how you are approaching that matter, and what you are doing to ensure that those steps have been taken and that the proper protocols are in place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just provide some assurance from one of our experts, someone who, although he may not be a household name, became very prominent at the time of the SARS experience. He said the following lately, and I take some considerable confidence from this as well. This is Dr. Donald Low, who is the medical director of laboratories, Ontario Public Health Agency. He said, "There's been a big shift. We really have come a long way. We had no way to respond to this six years ago. We didn't have the infrastructure; we didn't have the expertise; we didn't have the communications. Those are all there now. We're doing a much better job. It's good to see that that investment is paying off when we have a crisis like this." So again, I want families to draw some reassurance and confidence in that kind of a statement.

With respect to the specific issue raised by my colleague, I'm going to rely on our health experts to tell us what should and should not be done in those circumstances. Obviously, the priority has to be to protect Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Certainly, we trust that the minister is working with officials and staff at the local, provincial and federal levels in order to monitor and prepare. With that in mind, Premier, we would hope that we could get some assurance that regular updates, be it daily or perhaps weekly, be provided to the public in a formal manner. I would think that these updates, not just based on questions here in the Legislature, Premier, would be in a public format in order to provide concerned Ontarians with information about the status of the outbreak, the availability of a vaccine and ensuring that health staff are ready and available when needed. Will you make that commitment, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I couldn't agree more with my honourable colleague that it's really important that we keep Ontarians informed on this matter. My understanding is that Dr. Williams, our chief medical officer of health, will make himself available daily to provide information to Ontarians through the media. I also want to take the opportunity to invite Ontarians to help us so that we can manage this in the best way possible together. There are some simple things that we can and should do. We need to regularly wash our hands. It sounds old-fashioned, but it's really important today. Cover your mouth or your nose with your sleeve when you're coughing or sneezing. If you are sick and you think you're suffering from the flu, don't go in to work; stay home and contact your health care provider. We have a new ServiceOntario hotline, an info line, 1-800-476-9708, that's available to Ontarians so that they might become better informed about the swine flu.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's a good thing the Premier had a note sent in. At least we got some positive response to the questions.

My second question is to the Premier as well, and it has to do with yesterday's Toronto Star, where it was indicated that you did not advise your cabinet colleagues of your plans to bring in a blended sales tax. We know from earlier reports that you were less than forthcoming with your own caucus. Premier, why would you eliminate your own caucus from participation in discussions around the appropriateness of proceeding with this record-breaking new tax?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always pleased to take the opportunity to speak about our budget, and I appreciate the prompt from my colleague. We are determined, together, to build both a more caring and a more competitive Ontario, and our budget speaks to that very intention. Among other things, it does provide for busi-

ness tax cuts and personal tax cuts, and it does speak to the importance of moving ahead with a single sales tax. We're absolutely convinced that this package of tax reforms that we've introduced in this budget is absolutely necessary to put us on a stronger and a more competitive footing. We want to give our businesses the same advantages that they enjoy in 130 other countries and four other provinces; we want them to be able to compete on the same level as those other businesses in those jurisdictions. We want them to be strong so they can hire more Ontarians and generate the wealth we need to support our schools and our health care and supports for our vulnerable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Premier, you've shut out your own cabinet, your backbenchers and, with last week's closure motion on the budget bill, you've shut out opposition parties and, most importantly, the public, the people who will have to pay this gargantuan new tax.

Your finance minister says he has not heard one concern from Liberal backbenchers. You've turned this government into one-man rule. You've gone against everything you stood for as an opposition leader, and, true to form, not one of your backbenchers has enough steel in their spine to stand up and oppose your autocratic rule.

Premier, it's not too late to be faithful to positions you took in the past. Stop the quick passage of your budget bill, consult with the opposition and open the bill up to extensive public hearings. Will you do that?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague knows—it's something I've said many times before—that Minister Duncan engaged in more extensive pre-budget consultations than any previous Minister of Finance ever has. That was appropriate, in keeping with the nature of the economic challenge that we're all coming to terms with.

I think that Ontarians—in fact, I'm confident that Ontarians want us to take action. They oppose inaction. I believe they understand that there's no easy way out of this, that we're going to be called upon to do something to make sure we can look our kids in the eye and say, "We did what was necessary to protect your schools, your health care and our supports for your vulnerable, to make sure you could have good jobs. We generated the wealth to support a caring society." That's what we try to speak to through this budget. So while we do cut, for example, business taxes, we're also increasing the Ontario child benefit, increasing the minimum wage and reducing income taxes on our lowest income earners.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Premier, yesterday's news story also indicated that you've given your neglected and ignored cabinet ministers their marching orders, along with speaking points, and ordered them to get out and sell your new McGuinty sales tax because opposition is growing. There's nothing in the story about listening to taxpayer concerns.

In the PC Party, we've heard from residents in North Bay, Kitchener, Barrie, Lindsay, Cornwall, on and on, upset with this new tax grab, residents of Liberal-held ridings who apparently have no voice in this Legislature, represented by MPPs who won't even convey their concerns to the Minister of Finance.

Premier, this is wrong. It's wrong that you shut out the public. It's wrong that you've shut down your own members. Open the process up. Do the right thing: Honour your commitments of the past.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't share my honourable colleague's perspective with respect to how we're moving forward with this. At heart, the opposition parties are in favour of doing nothing. They think that the fact that this is the biggest economic crisis in 80 years doesn't warrant action; the fact that we've lost hundreds of thousands of jobs doesn't warrant action; the fact that families, businesses and communities have been devastated doesn't warrant action. We think that inaction is not an option.

I think Ontarians understand that we are being called upon, that our generation is being called upon to do something that is not easy. We understand that. We recognize that. We're not saying that Ontarians are going to rush out there and embrace a single sales tax. I understand that. But I believe they know in their heart of hearts that we've been called upon to rise to the occasion, and that's what we're doing through our budget.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: The news out of General Motors is stunning. The company's restructuring could cost Ontario up to 38,000 jobs. Something clearly has to be done, and it has to be done promptly. Why won't this government borrow a page from the Obama administration and insist on an equity stake in return for the substantial public investment that's being made to prevent GM from disappearing altogether?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to this. I know that my honourable colleague would want to recognize that, first of all, we're the only subnational government in the world which is at the table and putting considerable taxpayer dollars forward in order to strengthen our auto sector. We're the only one in the world.

Secondly, with respect to this whole issue of an equity stake, it may or may not be a real possibility, and I will not foreclose that possibility. I think we have to be pragmatic. So I say to my honourable colleague: I'm not saying no to that and we're not saying yes to that. I think we have to be open to all the possibilities. Whatever we are called upon to do to help strengthen the sector and put it on a solid footing, we remain open to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: If there ever was a time for public ownership in the auto sector, this is the time. Ontario taxpayers and auto workers themselves must have a direct say in GM's future course. We've invested far too

much to let the company make decisions independently. It's those earlier decisions that the company made that created this mess in the first place. When will the McGuinty government realize it needs an ownership stake to ensure Ontario's interests are protected?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've been there from day one as a government. We have firmly planted our flag in the future of our auto sector. For five years running, we were the number one auto producer in North America, an achievement we'd never enjoyed in the past. Now our sector, like the American sector and like the global sector, has fallen on hard times. We're going to continue to work hand in hand with the workers, with GM and Chrysler, with the federal government and, through the federal government, with Washington as well to see what we can do to protect the integrity of the sector for the future.

There are good reasons to be optimistic. We know that GM, for example, is going to launch six new products, and three of those will be built here in the province of Ontario. This speaks to the future. Honda has also announced they're going to build a brand new product in Ontario, beginning later this year. So here are reasons for to us remain optimistic about the future of the sector here in our province.

Mr. Peter Kormos: This isn't the time for more photo ops; it's time for bold and decisive action. Ontario taxpayers are flowing billions of dollars into GM. In return, there's got to be a public ownership stake. Why won't this Premier agree with that modest proposal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we'll just have to wait and see what unfolds at the table together with Ottawa and the workers and others. I think we have to be pragmatic in that regard.

I think my honourable colleague said, somewhat dismissively, that it's not a time for photo ops. I just want to say that we took a moment, just a moment this morning, to celebrate Honda of Canada's five millionth vehicle here in the province of Ontario. As I said just a moment ago, they made a commitment to begin to produce a new vehicle here in Ontario. I know this is a difficult time for workers, families and for the sector generally, but we want to work as hard as we can to put the entire sector on a solid footing so that workers in particular have good reason to be optimistic about their future.

MEDICAL EVACUATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Victoria George-Pazzano is a young woman in my riding. She has a family—a husband and a small son. Ms. George-Pazzano was vacationing with her family in Mexico when she tragically suffered a severe asthma attack. All the George-Pazzano family wants is to bring Victoria home so that she can see her son, perhaps for the last time. Yet the family is encountering roadblocks from this government. What justification does this government have for refusing the wishes of the family?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just say—I'm going to give the supplementaries to my Minister of Health—

that our heart goes out to this family who have a daughter in Mexico who has been stricken by a terrible illness. Obviously we want to do everything that we can to ensure that their daughter can be brought back here to Canada at the earliest possible opportunity. But as I understand it, that requires the consent of the attending physician in Mexico to ensure that it is in fact safe to transport their daughter here. But I want to assure the family that we have the capacity to accommodate their daughter, and we are more than prepared to assist in any way we can to receive her.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As people know, all this family wants is to have Victoria brought home to Toronto. While the Premier says that this family is not going to find roadblocks with the health care system, what they've reported so far is, in fact, they are meeting those roadblocks. Victoria's husband has arranged for an air ambulance transfer, but they're being told that the hospital beds are full. There is no place, they're being told, for Victoria to be cared for in her home province. Victoria's family suspects she is being barred because of fears of the swine flu. I appreciate the comments of the Premier, and I hope that in the answer that we're given it will be made clear what steps the government is going to take to make sure that this family gets the support that they deserve and need.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.
1050

Hon. David Caplan: I think, as the Premier has indicated—first of all, I want to let the member know that my heart goes out to the families in a very difficult time. I know that a lot of people are working very hard on this challenging situation. I have a concern for any Ontarians who become ill when they are abroad, and I want to be clear with the member and with all Ontarians that we have ICU bed capacity in Ontario to be able to accommodate this particular case, and all cases, in fact. There aren't any provincial restrictions on guidelines permitting the transfer of patients from Mexico into Canada.

I can't comment on the specific individual case, but in cases like the one the member has cited, the patient's care provider would work with the patient's insurance provider to secure an available bed in a hospital. As I mentioned before, it is not an ICU capacity issue. It's important to note that any decisions on whether the patient is well enough to travel is a decision made with their care provider—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As the person representing this family in this constituency, I have to say to you, Minister, that the family has been told that the problem is that there isn't an ICU capacity; you've said that there is.

Can you tell us why there seems to be this barrier between what you're saying and what the hospitals are saying to the family, and how are you going to pierce that barrier so this family can get what they need?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm not sure what has been communicated to the family. What I can assure this member

of, indeed what I can assure all Ontarians of, is that there is ICU bed capacity in the province of Ontario. I do know that a lot of people are working very hard to ensure that work can be done to help this individual and this family to be able to have a place in Ontario and to be able to receive the care that is so desperately needed.

I hope there will be a very quick resolution to this particular situation, but I do want to reiterate, for the purposes not only of this individual case but for all Ontarians, that in fact there is the capacity within Ontario's hospitals—an ICU capacity—that is available and that we will be able to provide on an ongoing basis the kind of care and treatment that any Ontarian would expect.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, you have claimed that your Green Energy Act will create 50,000 new jobs over the next three years in the province of Ontario, but you have not given a single piece of evidence to substantiate that claim. Now you've been forced to back off on your ill-conceived energy audit plan and your powers of search and seizure by your energy police.

I'd ask the minister: Given those changes and knowing that your plan was fictitious to begin with, what is your new fictitious job number for the green energy disguise?

Hon. George Smitherman: This is a fine opportunity to demonstrate, in the course of the legislative process, that bills can be refined and improved with the input of Ontarians and with the participation of members of the Legislature. We do want to thank the members of the committee who are continuing to do hard work.

It is true that we have offered an amendment on home energy audits, which will continue to be mandatory. We have created the condition whereby a purchaser may waive their right to an audit, perhaps in cases where they are intending to demolish the home or to substantially renovate it. On powers of search and seizure, which the honourable member did give quite a bit of attention to, we're very prepared to eliminate those because we feel very, very confident of full participation in those areas that might be subjected to it. By way of supplementary, I'll be happy to tell the honourable member more about how this is going to spark a green economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I'd just ask the honourable member to be cautious of his choice of words. There was a word that he used a couple of times in his question that is a bit questionable. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. Minister, your "50,000 jobs" figure is nothing but a fairy tale. Mind you, we in the opposition have been pleased to have been able to force you to back down on your ill-conceived plans in your Green Energy Act. We now know that there won't be an energy auditor lurking on every corner, and the toaster police have been unplugged. But I'm asking the minister to tell us again what effect this is going to have on those job numbers. London

Economics International says that your job numbers are unsubstantiated. They have examined your act through something other than rose-coloured glasses. So I ask you again, Mr. Minister: What is the revised job number for your green energy disguise?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member raises his friends whom he contracted at London Economics. He promised us a full study, which still hasn't arrived.

I say to the honourable member that last Friday we had the opportunity at the Green Living Show to hear from world experts, many of whom said that they thought the 50,000-job number was too low. Let me leave it to this quote. It does talk about the opportunity. This is from Don McCabe. Don McCabe is a vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and he's a straight shooter. Here's what he said. He predicts that 15,000 farmers could eventually sell biomass, such as leftover corn cobs, to that industry, bringing \$1 billion annually to the farm gate. The former tobacco fields of Norfolk county could be a perfect spot to grow crops for biomass facilities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

ATTAWAPISKAT FIRST NATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Last week, your government affirmed your commitments to Jordan's Principle. That means that no child in a First Nation anywhere in this province will go without services that are necessary to be able to survive in those communities, either by way of social services or health services. If this is the principle that you signed on to, can you tell me why, then, you're still allowing some 600 kids to be without school as a result of the diesel spill in Attawapiskat, and your government is doing nothing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question because it does give me an opportunity to once again say how proud we are as a government to stand with First Nations in making a statement last week declaring that, indeed, this government will abide by Jordan's Principle. This does put the health of children first in this province, ahead of jurisdictional disputes.

I'll speak further in the supplementary about the situation in Attawapiskat, because I probably won't have the time now. But I would say that the member knows full well there is no jurisdictional dispute with regard to what's going on in Attawapiskat. The First Nation knows that, the federal government knows that and the provincial government knows that. We are working together in this situation. We do take it seriously. I'll respond further in the supplementary directly to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You sure have a funny way of showing how you stand in solidarity with First Nations when there are 600 children at Attawapiskat who can't go

to school. You've got some 200 people who are ill as a result of the diesel fumes that are emanating from that particular site in Attawapiskat. What that community has told you is that the federal government is unwilling to do anything in order to double-check the situation as far as health and safety. They've asked your government to go in with Ministry of Labour, Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Health in order to ascertain what the health effects are to the kids in that community and the families.

This is clearly a jurisdictional dispute. Why don't you live up to your commitments in Jordan's Principle and go and do what the First Nation has asked you to?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member should familiarize himself with what Jordan's Principle means. It comes into play when there is a jurisdictional dispute. There's no jurisdictional dispute here. The federal government is responsible for the air quality in Attawapiskat. They know that; they're involved there; the First Nation knows that as well. We've been in touch with the First Nation. They're very much aware of that.

But despite that fact, we recognize the seriousness of the situation. We know that the First Nation would like reassurances. The federal government has been doing testing in there; they're doing more. We're reviewing that testing, as we committed to, to give reassurances to the community that in fact there are no health problems there. There's a third party that's doing testing as well.

We will continue to fulfill our responsibility. We will continue to work with the First Nation in Attawapiskat and we'll continue to work with the federal government to ensure that those assurances are given.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. All members will know and the minister will know that yesterday, the World Health Organization increased its global alert level to level 4. What this increase verifies is sustained human-to-human transmission of the swine flu.

1100

My constituents in Oakville, and I'm sure all over Ontario, are hearing news about the swine flu from sources all over the world. Intermingled with these ever-changing details, there's also a lot of speculation and a lot of rumours going on. So my question for the Minister of Health today is: Can the minister set the record straight? Specifically, are there any cases of swine flu in Ontario, and how can Ontarians continue to protect themselves against this illness?

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I want to start by reiterating that at this point in time, there are currently no confirmed cases of swine flu in Ontario. I know that of course Ontarians are worried, but we are doing everything that we can to keep them informed. Yesterday, for example, we opened a new ServiceOntario infoline to directly answer questions that Ontarians have about the outbreak. People can dial

1-800-476-9708 to learn more about how they can protect themselves from the flu. My office forwarded this number to all members of this House so that they can share it with concerned constituents. We've offered opposition members briefings with the chief medical officer of health, David Williams, and I'm happy to say that they have accepted.

Individuals should use the same precautions as for flu: Wash your hands frequently; cover coughs and sneezes; and stay home if you are ill. Individuals who think they may be ill should contact Telehealth Ontario or their local health care provider. I'm confident that experts not just in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I want to thank the minister for that answer. It provides Ontarians, I think, with a reasoned and a reassuring response.

I appreciate that the minister is doing everything he can to monitor the situation and to continue to provide Ontarians and this House with up-to-date information. But still, over the last few days, many questions have been raised about just how well prepared Ontario is for this outbreak. I've heard my constituents and indeed other members of this House ask about our province's preparedness in this regard. So I wanted to take this opportunity to set the record straight. Can the minister tell the House: How is Ontario prepared to deal with the current swine flu outbreak?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to reassure the House that Ontario is, indeed, well-equipped to handle swine flu. In fact, Ontario has learned the lessons from SARS. We have a network of people in place to be able to better monitor, to communicate and to coordinate in a far better way than we did in 2003.

The experts agree. I want to quote Dr. Michael Gardam, director of infectious disease prevention and control for the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, who says, "In terms of concern, we've been working on this for years. I think we're as ready as we're ever going to be for something like this."

Dr. Robin Williams, chief medical officer of health for the Niagara region public health unit, says, "I think we are as best prepared as we could be for whatever that storm is going to look like here.... We have surveillance now. Five or six years ago, we wouldn't even have realized this was happening."

Vicki Hawksworth, the Lambton county supervisor of environmental health and prevention services, says—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Finance: General Motors announced yesterday that 300 car dealerships would be closing across Canada. That means 6,000 direct jobs slashed and another 14,000 slated to disappear, plus

18,000 in the auto parts sector. Minister, this is happening on your watch. What have you done and what are you doing to keep car dealerships open here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: The province has been, since December, working with the car companies to keep them viable. The best thing that a government or investor or lender can do for that company to speak to the health of those dealerships is to in fact have a healthy company. These are the kinds of significant changes to the company that were deemed by the company to be necessary. It is obviously a big contraction to the industry itself, which reflects the massive drop-off in terms of sales. It's very, very tough news. It may in fact be necessary for the companies to do that in order for them to turn around and have a profitable future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Minister of Finance: This is about tax policy. I've written you twice with regard to the benefits of a tax holiday with respect to vehicle sales. You chose to ignore the warnings, and today we see the results of your inaction. Each dealership will be firing between 50 and 150 employees. Each dealership will no longer be contributing up to \$100,000 to sports, local hospitals and charities within their communities.

Minister of Finance, will you reconsider your position? Will you implement a tax holiday on vehicle sales and help stem this tide in job loss?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'll refer this question to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, we won't. I would refer the member to a column in the *Globe and Mail* yesterday by Eric Reguly that pointed out the failure of the German policy. It's consistent with what I said earlier to the member and his colleagues, that it doesn't in fact increase sales. What it does is move sales forward, and then, when the tax is removed, as it's going to be in Germany, there's no net benefit.

The member and his party have voted against every—every—initiative we have taken to help the automotive industry. They voted against helping General Motors. They have spoken and voted against helping Chrysler. They have not offered anything of substance.

The policies we've outlined in the long term, given the enormous challenge in the economy, are the right response today and will help rebuild this industry as we come out of this global world challenge.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Across Ontario, a backlash is brewing over this government's HST tax grab. MPPs' offices, including mine and, I'm sure, those of every single MPP in this room and in this Legislature, are being flooded with angry letters from

hard-working Ontarians who just can't afford the extra 8% at the gas pump and on their home utility bills.

At a time of unprecedented economic turmoil, what does this government have to say to the millions of Ontarians who are angry at this tax grab and rightly refuse to accept your explanations given in this House to date?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite what the Premier said in an earlier question, and that is, Ontarians are looking to their governments to take dramatic action to help build this economy and help get us through the enormous challenges we face. That's why we put together a comprehensive tax reform package, a tax reform package that will lower personal income taxes by some \$10.6 billion, with corporate tax cuts for both small and large businesses and, importantly, investments in vital public services—investments in tax cuts for the Ontario child benefit, for instance—the kinds of policies that, as we get through this challenge, and we will get through this challenge, will ensure that not only are we competitive but we remain a very, very compassionate society.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: This is the same tired explanation that people are not accepting out there in the province of Ontario. Apparently, this government's only response to the HST uproar is to send ministers out on the road armed with updated spin lines that we're hearing here today. No matter how they spin this tax grab, Ontarians are not buying it.

Yesterday, the government, through the Deputy Premier, admitted that they were wrong-headed in the mandatory home audits. Why won't this government now admit that the HST is bad economics and the wrong tax at the wrong time, and pull the plug on yet another wrong-headed policy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We don't agree with the member. I think what Ontarians want is a government that's prepared to confront the challenges of the day.

The people of Ontario reject a party that criticizes us for a single sales tax and that 18 short months ago wrote a letter to us asking us to increase the provincial sales tax. You were there; he was there, he was there, and he was there—all of them, Mr. Speaker. They were all there.

This tax reform package and our investments in the most vulnerable represent a bold response to the challenges in today's economy. It's about building confidence in our economy and maintaining the compassionate and caring society that Ontario always has been. When we get through this—and we will—we will be bigger, better and stronger, with better health care and better education for all Ontarians.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. On March 6, 2009, the Photo Card Act, 2008, became law. This authorized the creation of

an enhanced driver's licence as a passport alternative for entry into the United States via land or water.

Recently, other jurisdictions have begun implementing their versions of the enhanced driver's licence, most notably the province of Quebec and also the state of Michigan, a jurisdiction frequently travelled to by constituents in my riding.

I often receive questions on this card from my constituents. I ask the minister to share with this House the status of Ontario's enhanced driver's licence and when we might expect to see it available. I've been hearing conflicting reports on the release date of this important form of ID. Can you clarify this matter so I can relay accurate information to my constituents?

1110

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's an excellent question from the member, first of all.

As he knows, Ontario is introducing a driver's licence called an enhanced security driver's licence to help ensure the efficient flow of cross-border travel, that it is not interrupted by the implementation of the new US border-crossing rules which come into effect on June 1 of this year. We have been involved in negotiations with the US Department of Homeland Security and the Canada Border Service Agency, and I can inform the member from Essex that we are on track for that implementation date of spring of this year. This means that the first of those approved for the card will have it available to them by June 1 of this year.

The new card design has been finalized. Ministry staff have also implemented the new system that will be used, and of course people can exercise the other option of getting a Nexus pass or a passport if that happens to be their particular choice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: To the minister: I want to thank him for that answer.

Not only is the enhanced driver's licence an easy-to-carry tool for those living in Ontario, but it's also important for those in the States who like to visit our area, either on a planned trip, on impulse or on one-day trips. We have wonderful wineries and other tourist attractions throughout the Windsor-Essex area which rely on this type of travel. This card is important to those living in Essex, and I'm encouraged by the number of people who plan to obtain an enhanced driver's licence. I was pleased to hear that Windsor is one of the locations where the program is initially scheduled to roll out.

I ask the minister to share with this House a few more details on the enhanced driver's licence program. Particularly, how much will it cost and where will Ontarians be able to apply for this valuable card?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, if they're going to travel by air, of course, or they anticipate that could happen, they can obtain a passport from the Canadian government. But the enhanced version of this licence will cost \$40 above the \$75 price of a driver's licence. Currently a passport costs \$87, which means the EDL represents about a \$47 saving to travellers.

MTO worked with ServiceOntario to identify the initial locations. They were selected due to the expected demand for uptake. Enrolment offices will be initially located in eight communities: Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor, St. Catharines, Kingston, Ottawa, Cornwall and Toronto. The government recognizes that other communities may be interested in or benefit from an office where an enhanced driver's licence could be available. That's why we'll be monitoring enrolment volumes, and as demand increases, we'll consider more locations.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Consumer Services: You refused to answer my question yesterday about repeated calls for a public inquiry into the 2006 collapse of One Step Travel. Why did you ignore a meeting request by the Association of Retail Travel Agents when they wrote to you just two months before Conquest collapsed, on February 3, about the serious and prevailing consequences of TICO's failure on One Step and the safeguards a public inquiry would have put in place to prevent further collapses of vacation companies that lack sufficient working capital?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I answered the member's question yesterday, and I want to say this again to the member: The first priority when a travel company fails, the first priority of TICO and our government, is to protect consumers and bring the people back if they are stranded outside in any region. That is our responsibility.

I want to ask the member—this happened in 2006 and this was an Ottawa-based agency. Do you not want us to bring those people back? Do you want us to leave them where they are stranded? Is that what you want us to do?

Not only that, but this issue was raised in the annual general meeting of TICO last year, and TICO has ordered a third party review and I am waiting for the recommendations of that review. As I said yesterday, if any recommendations come out of it that we need to implement, we will do that.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "Wow," is all one can say—wow. But the Premier himself has often said that the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour. Minister, your mandate is to protect Ontario's consumers, yet your lack of oversight, accountability and apparent regard for what TICO has done has been pitiful. On June 25, 2008, an Ontario Court of Justice criticized TICO for not doing its job and said, "Should TICO have sanctioned One Step much earlier, perhaps the offences would not have resulted." On June 24, 2008, at a TICO AGM, members called for a public inquiry into the demise of One Step Travel. On February 3, 2008, as I just mentioned, ARTA asked you for a meeting to discuss a public inquiry into One Step, and on March 5, 2009, you told them you were too busy.

Minister, isn't it true that had you acted on TICO's failures with One Step, you could have prevented the collapse of Conquest?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: What is really true is that Ontario is very fortunate. There are only two other provinces in Canada that actually have a fund that protects consumers. TICO did everything to protect consumers and bring them back.

I think the member has missed an important point, which is this: My understanding is that the case of One Step involved some fraudulent activities, and charges were laid. The independent view was ordered, and we are waiting for the recommendation of the independent audit. If there are any recommendations that will come from that, we will implement them. But the important thing here is for TICO to act quickly and as fast as they can to bring people back into the country so that they don't suffer and they are taken care of. That's what TICO did, and I'm not sure that any of these activities could have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos: A question to the Premier: Grape growers like Don Wiley down in St. Catharines can't find a market for all of their grapes and are on the verge of bankruptcy because the Ontario government continues to allow so-called Ontario wines to be made with up to 70% imported grapes or juice. When is the government going to require Ontario wines to be made of 100% Ontario grapes so that grape growers like Don Wiley aren't forced out of business?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That is to the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We have a very good program to support our wineries throughout Ontario. I can say to the House that never has there been a finer couple of years in the grape industry and the wine-making industry than of late.

The House should also know that our government has consistently stood with both the winemakers and the grape growers in terms of assuring that, on balance, the industry is viable and that they're working together in the interest of Ontario consumers. We're proud of our wine industry. It has made great strides over the years, and we continue to stand with the industry.

Mr. Peter Kormos: More horse feathers—please. Grapes are rotting on the vine because grape growers like Don Wiley can't find a market. These are generations of families who have been working this very scarce, rare agricultural land. California has an 85% minimum California content. Why can't Ontario at least come close to the California standard?

The government, in October 2008, called upon the wine council and the grape growers to resolve the impasse. They've been unable to do so. The government said that if they couldn't, it would. When is this government going to act to protect grape growers? It talks a big game about Buy Ontario, but all it does is line the pockets of the ad firms down the road on Bay Street.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: As the honourable member opposite should know, VQA wines, which are really our

flagship label for Ontario wines, are 100% Ontario-grown wines. He also should know that when the Ontario grape growers asked us for help some time back with the lack of contracts for certain grapes, we provided one-time \$4-million funding. We did that proudly. We did that very much in the context of standing in solidarity with our grape growers and wine producers. We continue to be proud of both.

We have urged them to continue to work together to resolve some historical difficulties and we're optimistic that that will come to, dare I say it, fruition.

1120

ABORIGINAL HOUSING

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, recently you visited northwestern Ontario, including my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I understand you also visited Fort Frances and the Northern Ontario Municipal Association annual conference.

As you know, ensuring that there is enough housing that is safe and affordable is a constant issue that all levels of government deal with. In many northern communities in particular, aboriginal communities have come forward asking our government to assist in providing more affordable housing. They are doing what they can to provide for their fellow citizens, but they need our help as well.

I was pleased that you and Ministers Duguid and Gravelle announced a new program for off-reserve housing for the aboriginal community. Could the minister please inform the House about the details of this program?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to thank the honourable member. It was a pleasure to be back in his riding and also to be joined by my colleagues the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources. Together with the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Ontario Native Women's Association, we signed a historic memorandum of understanding that will see the investment of \$60 million in affordable housing for over 500 low-income aboriginal households living off-reserve outside the greater Toronto area.

This is part of our government's continuing effort to work to build strong, vibrant communities across Ontario, and it marks a historic partnership between the government of Ontario and the aboriginal communities of Ontario. I thank the honourable member for his interest, and we look forward to seeing this money invested in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Minister. At the announcement, you emphasized that the recommendations made by the aboriginal community for their housing needs off-reserve formed the basis of the FIMUR housing program. The aboriginal community led extensive

community engagement to determine the specific needs of the members of their communities. Across Ontario, the aboriginal community is demonstrating a true willingness to work with the government to provide the best for their communities and to strengthen Ontario.

This funding was made possible through the aboriginal housing trust. This is an important program that is delivering needed housing dollars to our aboriginal communities. Could the minister speak more broadly about the aboriginal housing trust?

Hon. Jim Watson: This is an opportunity for funds and programs to be run by the aboriginal community, for the aboriginal community, in the aboriginal community. It's a total of \$80 million; \$60 million will be going to off-reserve housing initiatives outside of the GTA, and for the remainder of \$20 million, we've signed a separate MOU with the Miziwe Biik Development Corp. that will provide new affordable housing for up to 320 low-income aboriginal households living off-reserve in the GTA. Twenty million dollars will be available for new affordable housing rental units, homeownership loans and home repairs.

We will continue to consult with our aboriginal partners so we can help make a positive impact on the lives of aboriginal peoples as early as possible. My ministry will ensure that off-reserve aboriginal communities in Ontario have fair, transparent and equitable access to the trust funds.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, this past weekend Simcoe county celebrated the annual maple syrup festival in Elmvalle. Tens of thousands of people attend this great rural event each year, and this year the talk of the community was a decision by the local school board to close the Elmvalle District High School.

The school board is reluctantly recommending the closing of schools such as Elmvalle because they simply do not have the money and the funding to keep them open. In Toronto, you found \$12 million to keep swimming pools open, but the Elmvalle District High School does not have a swimming pool and they never asked for one. They just want their school to stay open, not a pool.

Will you support the citizens of Elmvalle and flow funding to the local school board so the Elmvalle District High School can remain open to serve this vibrant rural community well into the future?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Whenever there is a decision about a change like the closing of a school or consolidations of schools or changing a program, I know those can be difficult for communities. But what I also know is that when local boards engage in consultation with their communities and they make a decision that is going to provide for better programming for students, those kids get a better opportunity in their schools.

The fact is that over the last four or five years we have provided millions of dollars. This year alone, rural boards

have received \$131.6 million in new investments, bringing their total funding to \$3.45 billion. They've received that money in the face of declining enrolment. By next September, there will be 106,000 fewer students in our schools than there were in 2002-03. We have worked very hard to buffer school boards against declining—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just want to quote from a letter that has been sent to you several times by the group Let's Build It Here and Let's Build It Now. It says: "The current situation at the school is unbearable. The on-the-ground capacity for the school is 366 students and our current enrolment is 585.... This year, 99% of our students will be attending at least one class in a portable, and at any given time 31% of our students are in portables. In fact, 44% of our school capacity is in portables."

Clearly, Minister, the need is there; it has been there for a few years. The school board could vote on June 17 to rebuild the Elmvalle District High School.

I was also at the maple syrup festival this weekend and was reminded in discussions with many merchants that the high school in Elmvalle is really the lifeblood of the community and certainly the economic lifeblood of the community. So there are the jobs to be considered and the businesses to be considered, as well as the quality of education for the students.

If the school board votes on June 17 to build that school, will you help to pay for it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that these decisions have to be made locally. The funding for the Simcoe County District School Board has increased by \$117 million since we've been in office. I think it is clear that we have continued to provide support for this board and boards across the province even though there are fewer students in the schools.

I think it would be irresponsible for a minister at the corner of Bay and Wellesley to make a decision about a school in a community where there are particular needs and there are trustees who know the community. Every board in the province has to develop a capital plan that provides the facilities and the programming for the students in those local communities. I have every confidence that the Simcoe board is going to be able to do that. My hope would be, actually, that the MPPs would be part of a constructive community process that would provide for better programming for the kids down the road.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday Magna announced it was laying off 725 workers at its Formet Industries plant in St. Thomas. That's on top of 120 layoffs already announced in January; that's on top of major layoffs at the Ford assembly plant in St. Thomas.

St. Thomas and other communities like it are being devastated by this massive job loss. Workers like these

now-to-be-laid-off workers in St. Thomas want to know: What is and where is the McGuinty government's plan to sustain manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: To answer the member's question quite directly, the support for the manufacturing jobs comes first from the budget, which provides significant tax changes for significant assistance to the manufacturing industry. Secondly, the government for some years now has been investing hundreds of millions of dollars to leverage billions of dollars of investment by the manufacturing industry through the advanced manufacturing investment strategy and other programs that have sometimes grown companies within the manufacturing industry and, in some cases, as we are heading through these consolidation battles between suppliers, provided assistance for future growth.

We met with Magna executives yesterday. These layoffs are temporary layoffs, I know the member would want to point out, and they reflect the huge drop in demand that people have had for automobiles.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?
1130

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think we should take from that that the McGuinty government's plan is the same old, same old—the same old that has seen over 300,000 manufacturing jobs disappear in the last couple of years, the same old that has the unemployment rate headed to double digits.

My question is more specifically this: It's interesting that when one of the Premier's so-called economic gurus, Professor Florida, was asked, "What should laid-off workers do?", his advice was, "Well, they should become creative and open an art gallery." Is that the McGuinty government's real economic strategy here for laid-off workers? Because the same old, same old obviously isn't working. What is the strategy? And is Professor Florida right in saying, "Oh, simply be creative; get a job in an art gallery"?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member reminds me that the Martin Prosperity Institute and the dean of the Rotman School of Management said just two weeks ago that the budget that was introduced by the Ontario government is literally going to completely turn around the approach, fiscally, that will allow for growth of our export companies. Roger Martin referred to the budget as "fantastic" and "excellent," and said as much on several occasions. In fact, it is a huge boost to the manufacturing industry.

It's a very tough time, no question, Mr. Speaker, for those workers in St. Thomas, something that I know you care very deeply about, and you continue to do your job as an MPP in that regard.

The government of Ontario has provided literally hundreds of millions of dollars in both assistance and stimulus to the manufacturing industry. We've been there for that industry before, and we'll continue to be with that industry in the future.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We all know about the importance of eating locally produced food. It provides benefits to the local economy and better returns for farmers, and is beneficial for our environment. We have talked about this issue many times here in this House, and I've spoken about this issue back home in my great riding of Hamilton Mountain, where my constituents are very interested in knowing where their food comes from.

A recent study conducted by Farmers' Markets Ontario shows that there is an increasing demand for farmers' markets in this province, and Ontarians place great value on knowing where their food comes from. Can the minister tell this House some of the results of this study?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is really important that we talk about the successful partnerships we have forged with groups like Farmers' Markets Ontario. They indicated to us that it would be important for them to do some research to understand what the purchase patterns are for the people of Ontario, and that study was conducted.

Among the highlights of the study by Farmers' Markets Ontario: Over 15 million shoppers visit farmers' markets in Ontario and 47% of Ontario vendors report that a greater-than-50% total of the farm income is generated through farmers' markets—indeed, a very successful venture in the province of Ontario. Fifty per cent of vendors report the creation of up to five jobs as a result of market participation. Farmers understand that by participating in farmers' markets, there is definitely job creation there.

The economic impact of farmers' markets in the province of Ontario is estimated to be up to \$1.9 billion per year. That is money that is raised and largely reinvested in rural communities right across Ontario.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean—Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services concerning TICO and the collapse of Conquest Vacations. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: In the members' gallery today we have some guests with us: Mira Majdov-Veselinovic and her daughter Branka Veselinovic. They are here to witness the proceedings of Parliament today, and I ask everyone to give them a warm welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RAINWATER COLLECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: This morning would have been a good morning to collect rain. Imagine all the water dripping from the roof of this building, for example. It could go on gardens and lawns. For every inch of rain that falls on a 1,000-square-foot roof you accrue nearly 600 gallons of water.

I've got a booklet here put together by the Ontario Horticultural Association, in conjunction with the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association. I commend these groups for reminding us about a very simple, inexpensive concept, something that we've abandoned over recent years. Our grandparents and our great-grandparents used rain barrels to supplement their water supply by putting their collected water where they wanted it for their own use. Today, much of that water goes right into a storm sewer or sits next to the foundation of your house or is pooled in the lawn.

History tells us that rainwater has been collected for 2,000 years. Clay containers were used in Thailand. Thirty per cent to 40% of the water used during the summer months is used for lawn and garden maintenance. Hence, get yourself a \$50 rain barrel and you'll earn that money back in water costs. It would seem we've come full circle if this idea continues to take hold. Very simply, everything old is new again, and in my book, rain barrels make sense.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION
NETWORKS

Mr. Peter Kormos: A few folks are coming up to Queen's Park tomorrow from down in Niagara—probably more like a few thousand, because you've got people across this province mad as all get-out, as mad as can be at this government's attack, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals' attack on smaller-town and small-town hospitals.

Down in Niagara, we've got a government hiding behind the skirts of the local LHIN. It ain't so local, is it, Mr. Levac? That LHIN covers Niagara, Hamilton, Haldimand and points beyond. A LHIN that's unelected, a LHIN with a CEO earning a salary of, oh, darn near a quarter of a million bucks, plus hundreds of dollars of other salaries—an unelected board, unaccountable, anonymous, irresponsible.

I tell you, our position is, the LHIN should simply be abolished. Can't fix it? End it; shut it down. Quite frankly, what we've got to do is start electing hospital boards—direct elections—at the same time as municipal elections. That's why I've got Bill 134 before the House now. Down in Niagara, each one of the 12 municipalities should have an elected member of the Niagara Health System so that you know what their political perspective is when they run and you know who to call when you're

mad; you know who to call when mom or dad hasn't been treated well. You could expect those directly elected people to fight to keep emergency rooms, maternity wards and mental health beds in those communities where the families of those people who are being hospitalized live. This government is the most anti-hospital government we've witnessed, bar none.

BAPS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I recently had the opportunity to speak at the second annual BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Women's Conference. The BAPS conference is held simultaneously in a dozen locations across North America to draw attention to the need to inject health, wellness and balanced development into the lives of women everywhere. I was pleased to meet so many committed, talented and influential women who work hard for the benefit of their respective communities.

BAPS has served Canadians since 1970 as a civic and religious organization which is dedicated to spiritual wellness, child and youth development, family unity, humanitarian services and, of course, Indian heritage. The BAPS Women's Conference also celebrated International Women's Day. Events such as this one connect women worldwide to commemorate and cherish their importance and influence in everyday issues.

I wish to thank Mrs. Kokila Sachdev, my constituent and the wife of the president of BAPS, for her hospitality and the pleasure of a personally guided tour of the Canadian Museum of Cultural Heritage of Indo-Canadians. The museum is fascinating, as it dedicates itself to communicating the diversity and cultural heritage of Indo-Canadians to all members of the community.

In closing, I wish to extend warm greetings to the participants and organizers of the second annual BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Women's Conference.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to make sure that the Minister of Education understands exactly what's at stake next Monday on Bill 157.

Monday, May 4, the social policy committee will meet to hear from citizens across Ontario who wish to participate in the democratic process. Stakeholders and parents will share their impressions of Bill 157 with that committee in hopes of strengthening what is a very weak piece of legislation. It is clearly a hush bill, thrown together to silence the opposition, who have been the only legislators standing up for victims of student-on-student violence and abuse. If this legislation is to make one iota of difference in the lives of students who face unimaginable bullying and violence on a day-to-day basis, it needs some teeth.

We must also remember to praise the brave children who have suffered violence and abuse at the hands of their fellow students and have had the courage to share their heart-wrenching stories. We cannot let their bravery

be for nothing, Minister. I hope you have the grace and the conscience to make the necessary changes to Bill 157. These changes will give these students the protection they need, the protection they deserve, and no less.

ORLÉANS-CUMBERLAND COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr. Phil McNeely: Last weekend, the Divine Infant parish Knights of Columbus in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans spearheaded an effort to refurbish computers for the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre.

The project, which started about four months ago, was led by Orléans native Doug Drouillard, who wanted to do something for his community. Working with community reps, Doug got connected with the Orléans-Cumberland resource centre, and then the initiative for the Knights of Columbus had begun.

For all the students in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans whose families just can't afford even the cheapest of computers, this program is going to make an enormous difference for them. Through the kind generosity of National Capital FreeNet, all the recipients of these refurbished computers will be receiving Internet service free of charge.

My special thanks to Doug Drouillard for all of his hard work and determination with this project, as well as to Isabelle Diotte from the Orléans-Cumberland resource centre, Pierrette and Luc Raymond from 1-800-GOT-JUNK for offering to pick up the two tonnes of rejected computers and take them for recycling, and the countless Knights of Columbus council members and volunteers who came out this past weekend to participate in the project.

In difficult global economic times, it is important to work together to help those around us who are less fortunate than ourselves. The Divine Infant Knights made this initiative a huge success.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: On April 7, I asked the Attorney General a question pertaining to the murder of Natalie Novak and the conduct of the crown in this case. Arsei Hindessa was convicted of murdering Ms. Novak after numerous breaches of court orders requiring him to stay away from her.

Further to this, on April 22, 2009, our leader, Mr. Bob Runciman, sent the chief coroner a letter requesting an inquest into the death of Natalie Novak. We now have received a response from Andrew McCallum, chief coroner for Ontario, and his letter reads:

"Dear Mr. Runciman:

"I write in response to your letter of April 17, 2009, in which you requested an inquest be held into the death of Natalie Novak.

"Inquests are considered in cases once all other investigations and court proceedings have concluded. In this particular case, the court proceedings against Arsei

Hindessa are ongoing in that the sentencing phase has not yet concluded. In addition, it is the policy of the Office of the Chief Coroner to wait until appeal periods have expired in the interest of natural justice and judicial fairness. Once this has occurred, the regional supervising coroner will consider the appropriateness of calling an inquest. Please be assured that the concerns such as those brought by you will be part of that consideration.

"Thank you for your bringing your concerns and request to the attention of my office.

"Yours truly,

"Andrew McCallum,

"Chief Coroner for Ontario."

It is our understanding that the chief coroner is indicating that after due process an inquest can possibly be called. We hope that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—and I know he's here today—will do the right thing and order an inquest for this unnecessary death of Natalie Novak.

1510

CARNATION REVOLUTION

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to commemorate the Carnation Revolution, which occurred 35 years ago in Portugal. After nearly 50 years of dictatorship, on April 25, 1974, Portugal began a peaceful revolution to throw off fascist oppression to become the democracy we know today. This is celebrated as the Carnation Revolution because, as a symbol of their commitment to non-violence, citizens, soldiers and many children put carnations into the army's guns and rifles. To the eternal credit of Portugal and its people, the armed forces preferred to lay down their arms and accept the will of the people rather than fire a single shot. My own family fled the oppression of dictatorship in the early 1950s, and like many others they sought the welcoming shores and open democracy of Canada.

So to this day, April 25 has a special significance to my family and to Portuguese people around the world. This year I had the pleasure of celebrating April 25 with our local Portuguese community. Associação do 25 de Abril held its annual dinner in Toronto, where we were honoured by the presence of a former colonel who participated in the revolution. I was pleased to be joined by Minister Fonseca and the member for Davenport as well as representatives from the federal government and the city of Toronto.

Further celebrations held in the community included a myriad of artistic performances in commemoration of this landmark in Portuguese and, indeed, world history. Portugal showed the world the path to democracy and freedom without violence; a path that they continued to follow by making great advancement in human rights, relinquishing their hold over their colonies and moving toward greater openness. They proved that we can begin and bring about great political change without resorting to violence. That's why the Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974, stands today as an example to the whole world.

NOBLE VILLENEUVE

Mr. Jim Brownell: Last Friday I had the distinct honour to attend the 13th induction ceremony of the Glengarry Agricultural Wall of Fame, held in Maxville, Ontario. Thirteen years ago, the farmers of Glengarry county and farm organizations were recognized for the work they do to improve soil and crops, to support livestock production and to help promote agricultural supports and services. The Munro and McIntosh Carriage Co. Ltd., the late Omer Poirier and a Williamstown farmer, Alfred Vogel, were the 2009 inductees. Joining them too was a man who was well known to this House and who spent many years farming, promoting farming practices and speaking for agriculture in the Ontario Legislature: the Honourable Noble Villeneuve.

Born in Cornwall, his early years were on the family farm in the Dyer Road in Maxville. For many years Noble operated a dairy farm, until converting it to a beef enterprise during the 1970s. He became highly involved in the farm credit association and eventually became a farm estate appraiser.

In 1983, Noble Villeneuve was elected to the Ontario Legislature and was the agriculture and food critic from 1990-95. In June 1995, he was honoured with his appointment as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and a dual responsibility as minister responsible for francophone affairs. Besides his grassroots knowledge of agricultural practices and pursuits, Noble provided a strong and active voice for farmers of eastern Ontario, and this was particularly evident during the ice storm of 1998.

On behalf of all my colleagues in this House, I extend sincere congratulations to Noble Villeneuve on being inducted into the Glengarry Agricultural Wall of Fame. We shall always respect and admire you for your tireless work for agriculture in Ontario and in your riding.

TRANSIT VEHICLE CONTRACT

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to congratulate Bombardier and its workers for winning a massive contract worth \$1.2 billion to build the next generation of Toronto streetcars. The deal for 204 cars is the biggest light rail vehicle purchase in North American history and includes a multi-billion-dollar option for hundreds of additional new vehicles. The TTC voted yesterday to award the contract to Bombardier, and they did this because the workers at Thunder Bay's facility deliver world-class-quality vehicles and service at very competitive prices. This builds on the last \$700-million TTC contract, which was supplemented with \$200 million from the government of Ontario, which helped secure more than 300 high-quality manufacturing jobs for Thunder Bay for five years.

Just recently, the government of Ontario came through gain when it provided \$56 million to purchase 20 new i-level rail cars for GO Transit from Bombardier. The total value of contracts awarded to Bombardier in the last few years now approaches \$2 billion.

It's my hope that the city of Toronto, which requires about \$800 million from senior levels of government, will make this contract a priority in terms of their applications to our government's infrastructure programs. The importance of this contract to Thunder Bay, to the workers and their families and to all of northwestern Ontario requires that the city of Toronto make this their priority.

I'd like to give special thanks to all the people of Thunder Bay who worked so hard at making this contract a reality. Without their effort and diligence, this deal would not have been possible.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL POLICYCOMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la politique sociale et je propose son adoption. Je vous l'envoie par le page Zachary.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption. I send it to you by way of page Zachary.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 152, An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario / Projet de loi 152, Loi concernant une stratégie à long terme de réduction de la pauvreté en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pursuant to standing orders 60 and 61(a), I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected for consideration by the committee. I give it to Cooper to take down to the table.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Dunlop, from the Standing Committee on Estimates, presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates (2009-10) of the following ministries for consideration:

Ministry of Economic Development: seven hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure: seven hours, 30 minutes;
 Ministry of Finance: seven hours, 30 minutes;
 Ministry of Research and Innovation: seven hours, 30 minutes;
 Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: 15 hours;
 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: seven hours, 30 minutes;
 Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services: seven hours, 30 minutes;
 Ministry of Community and Social Services: seven hours, 30 minutes—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Dispense. Agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being considered for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I believe that we do have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak on the National Day of Mourning commemorating workers whose lives have been lost, or who have been injured, in the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Today we observe a sombre remembrance in Ontario and across Canada: the day of mourning. On this day, we remember workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents and hazards.

Today is a particularly special observance of the National Day of Mourning: It is the 25th anniversary since its inception. In 1984, April 28 was first declared the National Day of Mourning by the Canadian Labour Congress. The Ontario government has been recognizing the day of mourning since the 1980s. Over the years, this observance has spread to many other countries.

Too many lives continue to be destroyed by workplace incidents and occupational illnesses. Too many workers lose their lives at Ontario workplaces, and too many are injured. As Minister of Labour and as a father, I find the statistics involving our young workers to be devastating.

Some of the injured are fortunate and are able to return to their jobs, but others are not, and their lives and the lives of their families are changed forever. The human toll of workplace incidents and illnesses is enormous. There is also a huge cost to our economy. What is most devastating is that these incidents could have been prevented.

No one should ever have to face the tragedy of a workplace incident. That is why our government is committed to preventing worker injuries and deaths before they occur.

1520

We have a number of initiatives aimed at preventing workplace incidents. This year marks an important milestone for one of those initiatives. It's the 30th anniversary of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act. The act came into force on October 1, 1979. Its main purpose is to protect workers against health and safety hazards on the job.

Much progress has been made in health and safety over the years as a result of the dedication and commitment of many individuals, but there is also so much more work to do, and we can't do it alone. All of us—government, employers, labour and unions—have a role to play in workplace health and safety. Today we're reminded of those roles. To my honourable colleagues who sit here in this House, I urge each and every one of you to make workplace health and safety a top priority. It's not only for the people of Ontario and the communities that you represent, but it's also for your own families and for your friends.

Some of you are wearing yellow and black ribbons like this one to commemorate today's event. I want to encourage all of you to wear these ribbons. The black represents mourning and the yellow represents hope, the hope we have for the future. Today, here in Toronto, the CN Tower will be illuminated in yellow as another tribute to honour workers who have been injured and killed. We must work together to make sure our loved ones return home safe and sound from work each and every day. It's our duty and responsibility, both as elected representatives and as citizens of this province.

In a few moments, we will observe a moment of silence to remember those who suffered tragedy in the workplace. Let us honour the memories of all those workers and pay our respects to their friends and loved ones who have also suffered. Let us do so while reaffirming our commitment and dedication to the ultimate goal of zero—zero workplace injuries and fatalities in Ontario. Wouldn't that just be wonderful?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I am pleased and honoured to rise as well today on behalf of the official opposition to mark the 25th anniversary of the Day of Mourning, which is when we remember the millions of Ontario workers who have been killed or injured on the job and those who have had their lives changed forever as a result of an occupational disease.

Last year, in my duty as MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, I was privileged to participate in the Sarnia Day of Mourning service in Centennial Park, where there is a permanent memorial set up to remember those killed on the job in the Chemical Valley. Having worked in industry and construction all my life, I have seen, all too often, workplace injuries and the stress they put on workers, co-workers and families.

Today is the day when we offer our condolences and our support as legislators to those families and individuals who have had a loved one killed or injured in workplace accidents. I can only imagine what the families of injured, killed or sick workers must go through when the loved ones whom they left in the morn-

ing for what should have been just a routine day of work in all too many cases never come back home, or if they do, they're changed forever. It must be a terrible feeling, and one that our words here will not be able to take away.

As the Minister of Labour pointed out, there are over 300 Ontarians killed every year on the job or because of occupational diseases. The International Day of Mourning is a good day to remind all members of the House and the province of Ontario of the importance of workplace safety. We should be using today to reaffirm our commitment to making Ontario's workplaces the safest we can, to recommit ourselves as legislators to prevent illness and injury and to reaffirm our commitment to zero tolerance for workplace fatalities.

I know that all three parties share the same concerns when it comes to making Ontario's workplaces safe. Fundamentally, we all share a common responsibility to make safety a priority and to work to eliminate injury and death in the workplace. We may disagree on how we get there, but we all want to see our workers protected.

As someone who has worked in industry, I was struck by the fact that workplace fatalities and injuries are all the more terrible because they can be prevented. As the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board reminded us last year, there really are no accidents. All members and employers should remember that today.

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats join in recognizing this Day of Mourning for workers whose lives have been stolen from them in their workplaces. Notwithstanding that this is the 25th anniversary of this event, last year alone, here in the province of Ontario, 356 workers were killed in their workplaces; slaughtered, taken out. They might as well have been assassinated. Thousands more, 317,000, applied for workers' compensation for work-related injuries. It's not a very admirable record, is it? We're not in some Third World country. To lose almost 400 workers last year alone—moms, dads, sons and daughters—and to have over 300,000 applying for workers' compensation, WSIB, is not a very impressive record at all.

We mourn for the dead; we fight for the living. And if we truly pay tribute to the dead and are committed to ensuring that workers are entitled to come home in the same physical condition—maybe a little tired—as they went to work in the morning, we've got to do far more than simply pay lip service. We've got to do far more than mourn. We've got to fight, fight, fight for the living.

Common sense tells us that when the minimum wage remains below a living wage and when workers, more often than not women than men, have to work at two jobs and three jobs, work 14- and 15-hour days, they're less protected than a worker who is well rested. We know that unionized workplaces are safer workplaces. Unions and collective bargaining that give a worker some control over the work conditions enable a worker to protect himself or herself from the brutality of a workplace assault, yet this government will not extend card-based certification to all workers in this province, including those workers who need it most, like the Wal-Mart

workers and the workers in some of the lowest-wage industries.

We know that the agricultural industry is the most dangerous place to work in this province: 40% of all cancers, we're told, are occupational, and one heck of a big chunk of that exposure comes in the agricultural industry. Yet this government persists in denying the constitutional right to organize into a union and to collectively bargain to those agricultural workers here in the province of Ontario. Notwithstanding that the Ontario Court of Appeal told this government that it was wrong, dead wrong, and that its anti-union bill and legislation was unconstitutional, this government persists in spending what will be tens, if not hundreds, of thousands more of taxpayers' money fighting that issue to the Supreme Court of Canada, in a fight that it inevitably knows will be unsuccessful.

You can't talk about believing in making workplaces safer for workers when you tell agricultural workers that they can't belong to a union and that they can't collectively bargain. Agricultural workers know that they're not in a high-wage industry. They want unions so that they can bargain around issues like health and safety. That's why they want to be able to unionize, and Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals have turned their backs on those workers. Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals have turned their backs on workers in other low-wage industries, inevitably the more dangerous ones.

We reject the proposition, of course, that there is such a thing as a workplace accident. These are attacks on workers, and it's inevitable that it's corporate greed that has prevailed when a worker leaves the workplace in a body bag, or when a worker leaves his or her workplace with a broken back or their sight stolen from them, their hearing stolen from them; their arms and other limbs broken and battered. As long as we support CEOs and their six-digit, seven-digit salaries and condemn workers who dare seek better wages, better pensions or dare fight to keep good jobs in their community, workers are at risk.

New Democrats want to make it very clear: We support the right of all workers in this province to belong to a union. We support card-based certification for every worker in this province. We support a minimum wage that's a living wage and we support people over profits.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and guests to please rise in a moment of silence in recognition of those individuals who have been killed or injured on the job or are victims of occupational disease.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PETITIONS

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition here today from a number of folks from the riding of Peterborough.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this great province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and will give it to page Cameron.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I have also signed this.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's March 26, 2009, budget introduced a harmonized sales tax to be implemented on July 1, 2010; and

"Whereas the harmonization will have a deleterious effect on all Ontarians, merging the GST and the PST to a regressive 13%; and

"Whereas new home buyers will be forced to spend 6% more on any property above \$500,000; and

"Whereas additional taxes will be levied on properties between \$400,000 and \$500,000 on a sliding scale; and

"Whereas rentals of commercial property will now be taxable for the first time; and

"Whereas legal fees, appraisals, commissions, home inspections, moving costs and other services associated with the purchase of property are now subject to HST;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that the McGuinty government not implement the harmonized sales tax, particularly where it relates to the sale of property and especially at this time of economic slowdown and recession."

I am in agreement and would sign my name thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a number of petitions here from the constituents in my riding. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the Burk's Falls health centre. It reads: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Burk's Falls health centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk's Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

"Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

"Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka–East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk's Falls health centre;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk's Falls health centre."

I support this petition.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very proud to present a petition from my riding of Ottawa Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

"Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

"Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon; and

"Whereas the following have endorsed SCAN legislation: city of Ottawa, city of Kingston, city of Hamilton, federation of Ontario municipalities, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Police Services Board, Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi, Ottawa Neighbourhood Watch executive committee, Concerned Citizens for Safer Neighbourhoods, Eastern Ontario Landlord Organization ... Somerset Street Chinatown BIA, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa and the Dalhousie Community Association;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation in Ontario, for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature and send it by way of page Lindsay to the table.

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas to impose a total ban on an activity or sport under the guise of protecting the public from injury as presented by MPP Helena Jaczek in Bill 117 to amend the Highway Traffic Act, section 38.1, 'No person shall

drive or operate a motorcycle on a highway if another person under the age of 14 years is a passenger on the motorcycle,' would be an injustice to us, the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the restrictive aspects of this proposal far outweigh the minor risks associated and confirmed by the annual Ministry of Transportation statistical safety reports, and further, there is no clear distinction that 'motorcycle-related injuries' apply to Ontario streets or highways, as stated in defence of Bill 117;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Request that Bill 117 be rejected and not become law."

I have signed this.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: The petition I have is brought to me from the good people of the wonderful city of Brampton, and it's in support of our vulnerable caregivers.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a number of ... caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign" caregiver "workers; and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support the people of Brampton, and I support this petition and affix my name to it.

1540

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Peter and Lucienne Weeks from the Blue Mountains for sending me this petition.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property

rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I've signed this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I especially would like to thank Teresa Wright of Erin Mills for having coordinated the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I'll affix my signature and ask page Kenzie to carry it for me.

SALES TAX

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition I received from Bray Motors in sunny Sundridge. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the auto industry in Ontario and throughout North America is experiencing a major restructuring; and

"Whereas the current economic crisis is affecting the auto manufacturers and the front-line dealerships throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas many potential automobile purchasers are having difficulty accessing credit even at current prices; and

"Whereas a three-month tax holiday of the PST on the purchase of new cars and trucks would stimulate auto sales;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario implement a three-month PST tax holiday on new vehicle purchases and that the Ontario Minister of Finance include this PST holiday in the next provincial budget."

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal”—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Many people are sending them—and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

I’ll sign this and send it to the clerks’ table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D’EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 23, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président, de l’occasion dans ce discours de discuter un peu de ce que le gouvernement propose dans ce projet de loi faisant affaire avec les changements à la loi de travail qui va donner certains droits aux travailleurs qui travaillent pour les agences temporaires.

Je veux dire, premièrement, qu’on trouve de plus en plus que les projets de loi dans cette place sont un peu, comment dire, moitié-moitié, comme on dit en français—c’est un beau mot qu’on peut utiliser—dans le sens que le gouvernement dit qu’il veut faire une belle affaire pour être capable de protéger les travailleurs, et il y a certaines provisions dans le projet de loi, oui, pour donner certaines protections aux travailleurs de la province qui travaillent dans des agences temporaires. Mais si on regarde les détails dans ce projet de loi, il n’est pas nécessairement que les travailleurs dans cette province vont être capables de courir dans la rue la journée que le

projet de loi est passé pour dire, « Regardez la grosse victoire ».

I want to say that I’m not taking the lead, by the way. I notice you’ve got me taking the lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You’re the leadoff speaker, so what you would have to do is seek unanimous consent of the House to have the lead stood down, if you wish to do that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: After one minute and 10 seconds, I would like to stand down the lead, with unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the lead for his party. Agreed? Agreed.

I’ll return to the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But, Mr. Speaker, if you had been listening to me, that’s what I did say when I was speaking in French.

Just joking. I stole that line.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No, you did not, but thanks anyway.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was only in jest. I thought that every now and then you can plagiarize a good line if you hear it, as long as you give credit to who gave it to you. Anyway, sorry. That really threw me off.

Comme je disais, les travailleurs de la province de l’Ontario ne vont pas exactement courir dans la rue la journée que ce projet de loi est passé en vigueur dans cette Assemblée. Les travailleurs vont apprendre que, sérieusement, il y a certaines déficiences dans ce projet de loi qui ne donnent pas nécessairement les protections aux travailleurs dans ces agences qu’on penserait qu’ils auraient voulu donner dans la première place.

Je veux donner une expérience que moi, j’ai passé à travers, parce qu’on a vu ce qui s’est passé avec les agences temporaires sur une période d’une vingtaine ou d’une trentaine d’années. On sait que ça ne fait pas longtemps que dans la province de l’Ontario les agences temporaires n’étaient pas des institutions telles qu’on voit aujourd’hui. C’était quelque chose un peu particulier. S’il y avait un travail très spécial, s’il y avait une situation un peu différente, il y avait une certaine agence qui donnerait au secteur privé ou au secteur public des travailleurs à la pigne quand nécessaire pour des durées de temps très courtes. Mais on voit à cette heure, comparé à 30 ans passés, que c’est devenu plus la norme dans notre économie. Au lieu de voir les agences temporaires donner l’ouvrage à la pigne aux individus pour venir travailler dans nos industries et au gouvernement, on voit que c’est plus la norme. En d’autres mots, cela a beaucoup accéléré, et je pense que le long et le court de l’histoire, c’est que pour beaucoup de travailleurs qui pourraient travailler à la permanence pour un employeur, avoir des bénéfices, être membre d’un syndicat, etc., ça a beaucoup diminué et leurs droits sont beaucoup diminués. On a vraiment vu une accélération à cette pratique d’utiliser les agences temporaires dans la province de l’Ontario.

1550

On va voir, par exemple—moi, je viens de l'industrie minière. J'en ai justement parlé hier, ici à l'Assemblée. J'ai fait beaucoup de mon temps à travailler comme électricien sous-terrain puis dans des moulins comme électricien dans les mines dans le nord de l'Ontario. Dans les années 1970 et 1980 même, on ne voyait pas bien souvent, il n'y avait pas beaucoup d'occasions, où les employeurs de ces mines, soit Noranda, Kidd Creek, Inco et ces compagnies-là, utilisaient des travailleurs à la pige. D'habitude, si on avait besoin de travailleurs, on en engageait pour venir travailler. Même dans notre instance d'un employeur où je travaillais, on va l'appeler Moore, on avait dans notre convention collective quelque chose qui s'appelait un employé temporaire qui était défini, qui disait que, si l'employeur a besoin que quelqu'un vienne travailler sur un projet spécial, il y avait du langage dans la convention collective qui disait : « Tu peux seulement le faire pour une période de 90 jours ». Si c'était plus de 90 jours, là tu avais besoin d'engager quelqu'un à la permanence, et ça faisait partie d'une convention collective qui donnait aux travailleurs une certaine protection.

Mais les employeurs de la journée ont dit : « Écoute. » Ils pensaient un peu à voir comment pouvoir contourner les conventions collectives, comment être capable de contourner le droit des travailleurs. On commençait à penser : « Peut-être ce qu'on peut faire, où possible, pas nécessairement là où il y a de bonnes conventions collectives mais spécialement dans les nouvelles mines qui ont été développées dans le temps : on veut utiliser des contracteurs qui eux autres vont rentrer puis faire l'ouvrage qui est normalement fait par les employés à la permanence dans ces industries. »

Donc on a vu, depuis les années 1970 et 1980, qu'une grosse majorité à cette heure des travaux dans les nouvelles mines qui se développent aujourd'hui sont faits avec des contracteurs. En d'autres mots, c'est beaucoup plus difficile pour un employé de négocier une entente, une convention collective, ou même de former un syndicat, parce que les employeurs ont finalement décidé qu'à la place d'engager le monde à la permanence pour la compagnie elle-même, ils vont engager les travailleurs, eux autres même, à travers des agences temporaires qui vont faire beaucoup d'ouvrage.

Si on regarde, par exemple, il y a beaucoup d'instances à cette heure dans l'industrie minière à travers le nord de l'Ontario où les nouvelles mines qui ont été ouvertes n'utilisent plus les travailleurs à la permanence dans leur compagnie. Je regarde, par exemple, le projet Montcalm. Le projet Montcalm, au sud de la ville de Timmins, a une centaine de personnes qui travaillent là. Pour la plupart, ce ne sont plus des employés à la compagnie. La plupart d'entre eux sont des travailleurs qui travaillent pour des contracteurs. Cela veut dire que si les travailleurs commencent à s'organiser et disent : « Nous autres, on va avoir les meilleurs bénéfices », soit par gages ou bénéfices pour avoir travaillé dans cette place, cela veut dire que c'est plus difficile à faire parce qu'il faut négocier ça avec le contracteur. L'employeur,

la personne à qui la mine appartient, dit : « Écoute, s'il y a trop de problèmes syndicaux dans notre coin, on va aller chercher un autre contracteur ». Donc, cela a vraiment détourné le droit des travailleurs de s'organiser avec un syndicat pour l'employeur. Puis je pense qu'à long terme pour l'économie ce n'est pas une bonne affaire.

Par exemple, si on a 100 travailleurs qui travaillent dans un plant quelque part en Ontario et eux autres travaillent pour la compagnie à la permanence, cela veut dire qu'il y a la chance de négocier une convention collective. Cette convention collective va dire que beaucoup plus de l'argent qui est payé pour l'ouvrage fait pour cet employeur va aller directement dans la poche du travailleur ou de la travailleuse. Dans ce point-là, cela veut dire que cet argent-là va être recyclé dans l'économie, et cela veut dire plus d'argent pour acheter les produits qu'on vend dans les municipalités pour acheter des maisons, etc. Si on a des contracteurs, cela veut dire que plus d'argent à la pige va aller à la compagnie au lieu d'aller directement au travailleur, ce qui veut dire que le travailleur, à la fin de la journée, va travailler pour moins, et ne va certainement pas avoir autant de bénéfices qu'il aurait eus s'il travaillait pour la compagnie.

Donc, le point que je fais : je regarde ce qui est arrivé dans l'industrie minière pour toutes ces années-là, et cela a beaucoup changé la manière dont le travail est fait dans cette industrie. À la fin de la journée, est-ce qu'on est bien servi ? Moi je dis, pas nécessairement. Je pense qu'il y a un point où, s'il y a une permanence à l'ouvrage, tu as besoin d'avoir une permanence à l'emploi. En d'autres mots, si l'employeur est en train de bâtir, on va dire, quelque chose en construction mais tu sais que c'est un point défini—c'est six mois, c'est huit mois, c'est un an, c'est 14 mois—là ça fait du bon sens qu'un contracteur rentre et qu'il fasse beaucoup d'ouvrage.

Mais quand c'est un job permanent, un job à la production qui va être là pour cinq, 10, 15, 20, 25 ou 30 ans, pourquoi donner cet ouvrage-là à quelqu'un à travers une agence temporaire ? Donc, moi, je le regarde et je dis à moi-même : « Est-ce cette pratique, avec cette loi, va être changée ? » La réponse est non. Tout ce qu'on fait dans ce projet de loi, c'est donner certains droits aux travailleurs qui travaillent pour ces agences temporaires, et on ne fait franchement rien pour protéger le concept de l'ouvrage.

Cette province était bâtie sur une certaine morale où le monde qui est venu ici en Ontario et au Canada des différents pays du monde a dit : « Je viens de l'Italie », « Je viens de la Pologne », « Je viens de l'Allemagne », « Je viens des Indes », de différentes parties du monde, « et si je travaille fort, je vais être capable de me joindre au succès qui est l'Ontario et le Canada. »

Je pense que, quand on a beaucoup plus d'agences temporaires, ça veut dire à ces travailleurs-là : « Vous pouvez continuer à travailler très fort », mais c'est quoi le retour qu'ils vont avoir dans notre société ?

Donc, il faut se demander, c'est pour qui, l'économie ? Est-ce que l'économie est là pour nous, ou l'économie

est-elle seulement là pour les entrepreneurs ? Oui, on a besoin des entrepreneurs. Oui, on a besoin du monde qui va gérer et penser à comment développer de nouveaux produits pour bâtir une économie et donner des opportunités économiques non seulement à l'entrepreneur mais, je dirais, à tous ceux qui sont affectés par la décision de cet entrepreneur. Si on a des lois dans la province de l'Ontario, comme au Canada et ailleurs, qui disent que l'entrepreneur peut détourner les droits des travailleurs et dire que les travailleurs peuvent être payés moins pour leurs travaux, est-ce que c'est vraiment une situation qu'on doit, nous dans la province, accepter ? Mois, je dis non. Je pense qu'à la fin de la journée, il faut reconnaître que les travailleurs, eux autres aussi, ont une partie dans cette économie. Un bon entrepreneur, une bonne entreprise, ne peut pas faire le succès sans avoir des employés qui sont dédiés à l'ouvrage que fait cette compagnie-là, et dédiés à l'ouvrage qu'ils ont besoin de faire, comme leur part, pour mener cette entreprise, soit à travers des travaux des journaliers ou des entrepreneurs eux autres mêmes qui ont la gérance de la compagnie.

Pourquoi seulement un secteur de la population peut-il partager les retombées économiques de cette entreprise ? Donc, je dis encore que ce projet de loi ne va pas arrêter ces pratiques-là, et à la fin de la journée, est-ce le monde est bien servi dans cette province avec cette situation-là ?

Est-ce que les travailleurs dans ces entreprises, à la fin de la journée, vont être protégés quand ils perdent leur emploi ? Présentement, si je travaille pour une entreprise et que je suis là pour plus de trois mois et finalement l'employeur, après un an ou deux ans, dit : « Je n'ai plus besoin de vos services », il y a certains droits que tu dois m'accorder comme employé. Tu as besoin de faire ça, de payer mes vacances et aussi de payer mes severances en partant de la compagnie. Mais présentement, si tu travailles pour une agence temporaire, ce n'est pas le cas. L'employeur, parce que tu es défini comme temporaire sous la loi, a le droit de dire : « Bye-bye. Prends ton kit. Vas t'en. À la fin de la journée, je n'ai pas besoin de payer tes vacances ou de payer tes severances » parce que les vacances, d'habitude, sont payées chaque semaine, un surplus qu'on donne sur le salaire lui-même.

Donc, est-ce que ces travailleurs-là vont avoir ces protections sous cette nouvelle loi ? Pas nécessairement. Oui, il y a certains travailleurs qui vont être protégés, mais ce n'est pas une protection qui est aussi claire que nécessaire pour tous les travailleurs dans un tel projet de loi.

L'autre grosse question qu'il faut se demander, c'est quels droits les travailleurs vont avoir sous ce projet de loi, comparés aux lois existantes de la province de l'Ontario pour tout autre travailleur. Présentement, si je travaille en Ontario, j'ai le droit à certaines protections sous les lois minimales du ministère du Travail. Si je suis un employé temporaire, ce n'est pas nécessairement le cas que je vais avoir exactement les mêmes protections sous les différentes lois du ministère du Travail, « Employment Standards Act » et d'autres projets de loi. Donc, est-ce que ces travailleurs, une fois que ce projet

de loi est passé, vont avoir, eux autres, les mêmes protections que les travailleurs permanents présentement ? La réponse est non. Les travailleurs ne vont pas avoir les mêmes protections que les travailleurs à la permanence qui travaillent pour d'autres compagnies en Ontario. Donc, il faut se poser la question : est-ce que les travailleurs sont égaux ? Pour une personne qui travaille dans la province de l'Ontario, doit-on avoir deux standards : un standard pour une classe de travailleurs ou ouvriers qui travaillent avec une agence temporaire et une classe pour les travailleurs qui travaillent pour un employeur permanent ? Moi, je dis non. On doit tous avoir les mêmes droits. On est travailleurs, c'est ça la clé. Les entrepreneurs, eux autres, ont tous les mêmes droits. Oui, il y a un risque à être entrepreneur, ça, je le comprends très bien, mais on a besoin des entrepreneurs pour faire ce qu'ils ont à faire dans l'économie. Ce n'est pas pour dire que c'est du monde méchant. Mais les entrepreneurs, sont gérés par toutes les mêmes lois, et tous les entrepreneurs au-dessous des lois provinciales ont les mêmes protections et ont les mêmes droits à la cour et à d'autres protections qu'on trouve dans la loi existante de la province de l'Ontario et du Canada.

1600

Mais ce n'est pas le cas pour les travailleurs. Dépendamment de la classe de travailleur, des protections ne sont pas les mêmes. Je demande aux députés ici aujourd'hui, une fois que ce projet de loi est tout fini et passé, est-ce qu'on va encore avoir des travailleurs à deux vitesses ou des travailleurs de deuxième classe ici dans la province de l'Ontario ? Et la réponse est oui parce que, autour de ce projet de loi, on verra encore continuer la discrimination des travailleurs et des employés temporaires, les employés d'agences temporaires avec des lois qui sont plus minimales que les lois qui sont acceptées pour les travailleurs à la permanence ?

Donc c'est clair que oui, ce projet de loi va une certaine distance pour donner des protections aux travailleurs, mais ce n'est pas pour dire qu'ils vont avoir plus de protections sous ce projet de loi. Ils vont avoir plus de protections, il n'y a aucune question là-dedans, mais ils ne vont pas être égaux à tous les autres travailleurs dans la province de l'Ontario. Je penserais que, comme Assemblée législative—aucune différence, à n'importe quel parti on appartient—on voudrait voir les travailleurs traités de la même manière sous la loi provinciale. N'importe quelle sorte de travailleur que tu es, si tu es un travailleur à la permanence ou un travailleur temporaire, tu dois avoir les mêmes droits en-dessous de la loi provinciale, et c'est clair qu'en-dessous de cette loi on ne va pas l'avoir.

L'autre question devient, avec les vacances qu'on a telles que Noël, le Jour de l'An, la Fête du Canada etc : présentement, si je suis employé à permanence et que je suis avec cet employeur plus de, je pense, 30 jours sous la loi présente, j'ai droit à toutes mes vacances statutaires. Il y a 10 ou 11—c'est 12, hein ? C'est 12 jours de vacances obligatoires auxquels tu as droit présentement sous la loi ontarienne. Si je suis un employé avec une

agence temporaire, il y a des situations où je ne vais pas avoir accès à ces mêmes vacances. Je demande encore la question : comme législature, est-ce qu'on veut s'assurer que tous les travailleurs ont les mêmes protections et les mêmes bénéfices que les autres travailleurs, ce qui sont les standards minimales qu'on donne dans les lois du ministère du Travail dans la province de l'Ontario?

Monsieur le Président, j'imagine que vous, comme moi et les autres députés de cette assemblée, allez dire : « Mais oui, les travailleurs sont égaux. Si les entrepreneurs ont tous les mêmes droits, on doit accorder les mêmes droits aux travailleurs ». C'est seulement quelque chose qui fait du bon sens. Ce n'est pas quelque chose de vraiment radical. Mais quand on regarde présentement la pratique, on sait que les travailleurs qui travaillent non à la permanence mais pour les agences temporaires n'ont pas les mêmes protections sous la loi présente. Quand je regarde le projet de loi, ça va être encore la même situation.

Je vous demande, c'est quoi qu'on essaie de faire ici? C'est quoi que le gouvernement essaie de faire? Je vais vous dire mon impression, puis c'est mon opinion : le gouvernement a toujours l'occasion et veut toujours être vu comme : « Ah, monsieur McGuinty, le gouvernement libéral : on est donc beau. Regardez les belles affaires qu'on fait pour le monde de la province de l'Ontario ». Les députés libéraux provinciaux puis le premier ministre puis le cabinet peuvent se promener autour de la province en disant : « Regardez. On traite les travailleurs si bien. On a un projet de loi qui est là pour protéger les travailleurs qui travaillent pour les agences temporaires ». Et les travailleurs, eux autres, parce qu'ils n'ont pas tous les détails puis ils n'ont pas le temps non plus pour être capables de lire tous ces projets de loi, disent : « Ah, mais c'est beau. Mon Dieu. Wow. C'est tout quelque chose. Quelqu'un veut me protéger. Peut-être que c'est un bon gars, ce gars-là, après tout. Peut-être qu'il augmente mes taxes, mais il me donne des protections sur l'autre bord ». Mais je vous demande, si vous êtes travailleur dans une agence temporaire, de prendre l'occasion de lire le projet de loi, et vous allez voir que M. McGuinty a de belles paroles, mais quand ça vient aux protections que tu dois avoir sous la loi, tu n'as pas les mêmes protections que tu aurais si tu étais un travailleur à la permanence pour une entreprise. Donc, cela devient un choix : cette Assemblée peut décider dans ce débat, et une fois qu'on a fini au comité et finalement la troisième lecture, soit de protéger les travailleurs temporaires soit de ne pas les protéger.

Moi, je dis que ce projet de loi ne protège pas les travailleurs d'une manière où on pourrait être satisfaits comme néo-démocrates. Moi, ce que je veux voir c'est que si on passe un tel projet de loi, qu'on donne à tous les travailleurs dans cette province les mêmes droits. Je répète encore : les entrepreneurs de la province de l'Ontario sont gérés par toutes les mêmes lois. Il n'y a pas un entrepreneur qui a comme différence ce à quoi il a accès quand ça vient aux lois pour les protéger ou ne pas les protéger, dépendant de quelle manière tu le regardes.

Mais la question devient qu'ils sont tous les mêmes : les entrepreneurs sont tous traités de la même manière sous la loi; ils sont tous traités de la même manière, avec les lois.

Mais quand ça vient aux travailleurs, eux autres ne sont pas protégés de la même manière. On a deux classes de citoyens : on a les travailleurs à la permanence et on a les travailleurs qui sont dans les agences temporaires. C'est le cas avant ce projet de loi; je dis que ça va être le même cas après ce projet de loi. Je demande au gouvernement, quand ils écoutent ce débat et veulent regarder quoi faire à la deuxième lecture, de faire les amendements qui vont être nécessaires pour assurer que tous les travailleurs de la province de l'Ontario soient traités d'une manière égale et traités avec du respect et de la dignité dans cette province, et non pas comme deux classes de citoyens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member from Timmins—James Bay speak about third reading of Bill 139. I know he spoke about many different elements of protection for workers in the province of Ontario, and I know he is not satisfied in the end, after the third reading, with what we introduced in this House. But I want to tell the member that it's important to address all these issues and talk about them in detail. We have to create a balanced approach.

As you know, in this bill—I guess I'm going to, in 10 minutes, speak for a long time to explain my position, how I understand the bill and how we can strengthen the Employment Standards Act in Ontario in order to protect workers in this province. I know the member spoke about how we can protect the workers who go to work on the assumption they're going to have a job and a vacation, and all of a sudden they lose all this stuff without any protections. But as a matter of fact, this bill will protect those workers who want to work through a temporary agency. That's why the Minister of Labour introduced this bill and that's why our government introduced this bill: to create some kind of protection for people who go through temporary agencies in this province.

I think it's important to create a balance. It's important for the government to interfere and create that protection for people who we believe are vulnerable, especially for newcomers and new immigrants who don't understand the laws. There are many different good elements of protection in this bill for people who want to work in this province through employment agencies.

So hopefully I'll get 10 minutes, in a few minutes, to speak in detail about my position and explain our thoughts as a government on this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to be able to comment on the remarks for the member for Timmins—Thunder Bay, and—

Mr. Michael Prue: That's a big riding.

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's a big riding, is it? Did I get the right—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: James Bay.

Mr. Robert Bailey: James Bay. Sorry.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thunder Bay is on the other side.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I don't know my geography that well, I guess. I'll admit to that.

Anyway, I found the comments very interesting, and I'm going to speak a little later about our side of the House's take on the bill.

I sat through the committee hearings and was interested to hear the submissions from employer groups, employees who came in and spoke, and many employee groups. People came in and spoke about the need for temporary agencies and how a number of them went from temporary placements to permanent employment. A number of agencies came in and spoke about the need that their agencies will fill when the economy does recover, down the road: A number of employers will look to temporary agencies for employees to fill that gap as they move forward. We had a number of larger companies and a number of smaller businesses. One thing that did come through was that a number of the temporary employee agencies felt that they were being portrayed in the worst light and said they were horrified at the process. They were being made out to be some type of villain. Acknowledging that there may be a number of bad apples in the industry, no one wanted to see those people dealt with any more than them, because it gave the whole business a bad feeling.

I look forward to speaking as well in further remarks as my time comes up.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It was a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Timmins—James Bay and the way he spoke so eloquently. I had not heard a debate on this topic ever in French, and to listen to how he brought it forward, how he talked about his own experience, how he talked about the mines, how he talked about Kidd Creek and all of those things, brought it all together, but the nub of what he had to say was that this legislation will continue to allow for a second-class status to people who work through temporary agencies, and I think that is the failure of the legislation. It acknowledges and continues second-class status for a group of people, a great number of people, including those who work in temporary care, and that will continue to exist.

What my colleague from Timmins—James Bay had to say that was he was not satisfied, and he is correct. We should not be satisfied that in this great province of Ontario there are two levels of citizens: those who have permanent jobs that pay decent wages and benefits, and those who work through a temporary agency—usually through no fault of their own—who have somewhat less protection.

He said it very well, and I commend him for what he had to say in terms of the legislation itself. As a New Democrat, of course, he is probably a little worried about this, too. What do we say? Do we think this is a good

bill? Obviously not. Is it a step forward in a few small regards to some people? Yes, it is. There are aspects of the bill that are correct. There are aspects of the bill we must support, but in the end it is a lot about nothing to people who are looking to us for some real huge support and unfortunately will not find it within the body of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I want to thank everyone who spoke on this issue. All we're trying to do is make the lives of people who work under temporary agencies better, and I think this bill has done precisely that. I just want to outline some of the aspects that are enshrined in this bill.

Temporary agencies—we need the good ones. We've had presentations from many great temp agencies who do just wonderful work in terms of placing people in permanent jobs in a well-coordinated and respectful way. What we're not in favour of is these fly-by-night temp agencies who abuse the sometimes new immigrants and visible minorities.

One of the aspects of this bill is that temp agencies will no longer be allowed to charge temporary-to-permanent fees. I've already been hearing from many of my constituents and from people all over Ontario that there's a huge markup between what client companies pay temp agencies and what workers receive. So this is one very good step in terms of putting more money into the pockets of temporary workers.

Also, there will not be fees for services such as resumé writing or interview preparation. Often these are just frivolous, made-up fees that again drastically reduce the amount of money that people earn sometimes in very onerous, labour-intensive positions.

Also, one other element is the anti-reprisal side of this bill. If someone complains, they will not be punished, and they can bring their complaints forward without any reprisal being taken.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins—James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to make the point that this is all about incrementalism. If you believe in incrementalism, you have a party, and it's called the Liberal Party. They will give you what you want to hear when it comes to the great words, but when it comes to moving the agenda forward, it really is about incrementalism, and the sense is that you're not going to get to where you want to go in the timely fashion that you wish.

This bill—let's be clear: Once it's passed, there will still be two classes of workers, period. You will still have workers in this province who work for a permanent employer who will have greater protection under the law than a worker who works and does the same job for less money in a temporary agency. That's the test.

What I'm saying is this: Is this bill totally bad? Obviously not. It does move the yardstick forward. It is a step forward. I'm not going to say everything in this bill is a step back and is terrible. It tries to deal with an issue, but it doesn't bring us to where we need to be.

The argument that I put forward is this: When it comes to entrepreneurs in this province, they all play by the same rules. They're covered by the same laws of Ontario and the same laws of Canada. They may like those laws or they may dislike those laws—in many cases they don't like them at all—but they're all subject to the same laws. No matter what happens with the entrepreneur, he or she, who goes and invests to start up a business—they play by the same rules.

Workers in this province, under this bill, will not have the same protections. You will have two classes of workers: those who work for a permanent employer, who have the full weight of the Employment Standards Act and the Employment Relations Act to give them the protection that they need at a time when an employer decides to do something that is not exactly the right thing to do towards the employee; and you will have those employees who work for temporary agencies, who, yes, will have better protection than they had before—but they will still be treated as two classes of citizens. Why should we stand for that in this Legislature?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm privileged and honoured to stand up and speak in support of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters.

This is an important step towards a brighter future for the workers of this province. I still remember when my colleague from Brampton West brought this issue forward to this House as a private member's bill a few years ago. He spoke about temporary agencies. He spoke about the bad ones, he spoke about the good ones, he spoke about the need for temporary agencies, and he spoke about the importance of regulation in this industry, because this industry wasn't regulated.

As you know, temporary agencies in this province were created as a result of a need for temporary workers, whether a company needed people for five days, 10 days, a week or a month. Those temporary agencies came to supply the demand being created by many successful companies across the province of Ontario. As you know, sometimes a company or an agency needs people because they're short of workers—somebody is sick, somebody is on maternity leave, somebody is on sick leave—for whatever reason. Those temporary agencies were created to fill those demands and supply those companies to continue work on a regular basis.

As we grow, as our economy grows on a daily basis, those temporary agencies also grow alongside those companies and those factories that are spread out throughout this beautiful province. Those agencies work very hard to supply those companies, to supply the demand which is being created on a daily basis in this province.

But some of those temporary agencies abused the system and took advantage of the vulnerable people who were looking for jobs badly.

I'll give you an example. I remember listening to the Minister of Labour speaking a couple of days ago about

his experience. When he was a young guy, he read an article in a paper, an advertisement for a person who can make up to \$20. When you talk about 20 years ago, \$20 per hour was a lot of money back then. But when he went, he discovered a lot of different things. False advertisement—they told him he can get this and this and this if he does one, two, three, four. He went and did whatever they asked him to do, but in fact it wasn't correct information. That's why he left or was forced to leave without any payment.

Also, many people want to find a job to feed their families—many newcomers who come from different parts of the globe. They don't understand the regulations and the rules in this land. They want to just focus on finding money to feed their families. They go wherever, they do whatever, in order to create some kind of protection and to feed their families.

1620

So what happened? Those temporary agencies used to take advantage of them because there were no rules, no protections. According to the laws and rules in this province, there was no reason for them to provide new workers with any information concerning the job or how much they would get, about the vacations. As the member for Timmins—James Bay mentioned, there are two classes. People who do the same job, get vacation pay, they get a certain amount of money, but the other person, who works through the temporary agency, gets less money, no vacation and no protection. Also, as a matter of fact, many of those temporary agencies used to ask for fees: "If you're going to work for us, we'll allow you to work, but you have to pay \$500 as a tipping fee to allow you to enter the job. Then, if you perform well, we might give you back that money." So many companies created wealth through their careers by asking new workers, through the temporary agency, to pay a certain fee. All these accumulated fees created some kind of wealth for those companies. There was no protection for that reason.

But what happened, through this bill—if this bill is passed—we heard from many different people who came before the committee and spoke clearly and loudly about the importance of creating a law in this province to protect the workers. We listened to the Conservative Party many different times. They don't agree with that. They want no regulations, no rules. They want to apply the open market; the market would dictate the rules and regulations. But our duty and our responsibility as people elected in this province is to protect the workers, to protect vulnerable people. We believe strongly as a government, as a Ministry of Labour, in protecting workers in this province, in creating fair grounds for everyone, an even, level field for everyone, in creating an opportunity for the people who want to work, who want to pay back this province, who want to work and to provide support for their families and not to be used and abused through a system in this province. That's why the Minister of Labour came with an aggressive bill to create that balance.

So many different temporary agencies do an excellent job in the province of Ontario. They provide a service

and they deserve respect and protection. They do it because they believe strongly they have a role to play in this economy. But on the other side, there are so many different people who come to the marketplace to take advantage of vulnerable people. That's why this bill creates that balance, creates the protections. I think it's important for all the people who want to work to know the rules and regulations before they go to work, before they start working, because they might have understood it differently; they might not know exactly what that job required. We don't want to get anyone in trouble. Therefore, if this bill passes, it will require the temporary agency to provide all the workers with all the information needed about the nature of the job, and also prohibit any temporary agency from applying any fee to anyone, and also make sure all the people working through that temporary agency get their vacation pay, get a similar salary with no discrimination against anyone. Despite the member for Timmins—James Bay, this bill will create a balance. It doesn't create two classes of workers. As a matter of fact, it creates a level field for all the people who want to work in the province of Ontario.

Do we need those temporary agencies? As I mentioned at the beginning, yes, we need them. As I mentioned at the beginning, those temporary agencies play a pivotal role in our economy, in our communities, in our cities and towns. Sometimes people don't need full-time jobs. They want to fill some kind of job for a couple of days, a couple of hours, whatever. So that's why they're needed. But our duty and obligation as a government is to create that balanced approach, to protect the people who want to work in this province. I believe that by creating that balance, this bill will achieve the goal and achieve a level of understanding between the temporary agencies and the new workers, and it will create some kind of protection mechanism for the people who want to work through those temporary agencies to get their holiday pay, to get the same salary as other people, to know exactly what the job is all about. All this adds support that wasn't there before.

I think it's important, every once in a while—it depends on how the economy grows; it depends on the nature of the jobs; it depends on the structure of our community—to come up with some kind of rules and mechanisms to create some kind of protections for the people who work in the province of Ontario.

Many people spoke before me, and I know some people are happy with certain elements and some people are not happy at all with this bill because they think it's not needed, especially the Conservative Party. Some of my colleagues spoke in support because they know it's the only way we can approach this issue: by creating a balance, by inviting and rewarding those companies who follow the rules and regulations of this province, that are created just to create jobs and help other companies to grow, and also to find an opportunity for many workers in this province to work.

As you know, not everyone has the ability to find a job. Not every one of us in this province has the

techniques or the credentials or the connections to find a job, so that's why some of these temporary agencies, when you go through them, find you a job that suits you. They find you a job that matches your education and your qualifications. Some of them do an excellent job in order to match the jobs with the workers and with the factories and companies. Some of them, as I mentioned, take advantage. That's why this bill, if passed, will create the balance and create protections for the people who are looking for jobs and who don't want to be taken advantage of.

Also, if this bill is passed, the government will, to a certain degree, fulfill its obligations toward the workers in this province and toward the companies and temporary agencies that want to do a good job, that want to follow the rules and regulations of this province. Also, I think this bill, if passed, will weed out all the fly-by-night agencies and temporary agencies that want to come to the market just to gather the money without any respect for the rules and regulations, without any respect for the workers who pay their time and effort.

Today is an important day. All of us are wearing the ribbon to remember the people who died while they were working.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak. Hopefully this bill will be supported by all the members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for the comments from the member from London—Fanshawe.

I just thought I'd get on the record parts of an e-mail I received from the past president of ACSESS, Gary French, who happens to be a councillor in my riding, in Archipelago township, and he's an expert on this area. He points out:

"The general trend for the past two decades has been to deregulate the industry globally, recognizing the importance of labour market flexibility as a vital component to competitiveness in the global marketplace. As such, the legislation as it now stands would increase costs through the continuing work provisions, to which ACSESS objects, both to staffing companies trying to administer the provision and to end users of the services provided who have choices where their work is carried out. New costs would have to be passed on and would form a part of the business case as to where work is carried out. For example, IBM operates many contact centres across Canada and has announced plans to consolidate these to less cities in Canada as well as transfer some of what is currently being done in Canada to Colorado. It would also introduce employment legislation to the staffing industry, whose bedrock, in all North American industries, is to abide by the same laws that apply to all employers. Why would Ontario want a new cost and, more importantly, a new and negative cost consideration that defines Ontario in a negative competitive light, to become part of the business case analysis for all companies seeking to improve their com-

petitive position? Why would Ontario seek to highlight that it leads the way in employment legislation designed specifically to reduce flexibility and increase the cost of doing business? This is an example of legislation that, while perhaps well intended, will hurt the very people it purports to help at a time when, I would suggest, Ontario needs to build every competitive advantage that it can instead of putting up new roadblocks for business."

He goes on: "Let me just say that the employment relationship between a worker"—and I can see that I'm running out of time, so I can't summarize further. He's pointing out that this may have good intentions, but it's going to increase costs, making Ontario less competitive, as so many of these Liberal bills have, and Ontario becomes less and less competitive in this worldwide, global economy.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from London—Fanshawe and what he had to say. As a matter of fact, I thought he was in full flight after about 10 minutes in explaining what he wanted to do, when mysteriously there came a hook from the other side and he seemed to be cut off in what he wanted to say. I was a little disappointed, because I was hoping that he would have explained to the Legislature here why he thought it was such a good bill, and about all of the good intentions.

I know that he has a two-minute response. I would really like him to explain to me, and perhaps to all of the people who wonder, why the Liberal Party took the extraordinary step during the preparation of this bill—at second reading, and in committee—of excluding home care agency workers.

Home care agency workers are not being given the same rights as everyone else. Home care agency workers, in my opinion, should not have to wait three more years before they get termination and severance rights. If you're going to say that this is a step forward for all workers, why are these workers being forced two steps back? Why are they not being given the same legislative rights that you're so proud of, the member from London—Fanshawe?

I know that you were cut off before you had a chance to explore this very weighty issue, but I'm hoping, in the last two minutes, that you can go on to that. You did start off in a very correct mode by saying that the majority of people who work for temporary agencies and who have been exploited in the past are new immigrants, people of colour, and women, and surely they deserve that kind of protection. The ones who deserve it most, I would suggest to you, are the home care agency workers, who are not being protected at all.

I'm waiting for your two minutes, and I know that you will make every single effort to finish what the whip would not allow you to do in your 20-minute speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I too watched in amazement as my good friend the member from London—Fanshawe was in full flight. I thought he was making some pretty good points. I don't necessarily agree with him in the sense that the bill goes as far as he was making it out to be, but I thought he was making good points. And I saw for myself, with my own eyes, the whip reach across the aisle and just cut him off at the knees and bring him down. I want to say, as a fellow whip: That's disgusting. You would never see me do something like that to one of my members. In fact, they'd cut my knees off if I tried to do it.

So on behalf of all the members of the House, I say: Free Khalil. Allow him to give his entire speech. We should be asking for unanimous consent to give him another 10 minutes. I'm just hoping that one of the government members will get up and do that, because I'm sure that it will be supported from this side of House.

I say to my good friend the member from London—Fanshawe that it's always a pleasure to listen to him. But be freed—let the whip go down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Leading up to this bill, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I had the opportunity to hold several consultations over the summer with many employee, employer, and union groups. We heard what they had to say.

After the bill was introduced and went into committee, we heard from many people from across Ontario. Listening to the stories, it felt like some of the horror stories that were presented in committee were plagiarized, in a way, for lack of a better word. But they weren't; they were real stories, and they were similar, and they stressed the same points that were heard when my bill about temp agencies was introduced in the previous term. I believe that bill was intended to license temp agencies, and we got a considerable amount of interest in that from people all over Ontario, which led to this bill.

Before, when I was speaking, I was speaking about reprisal, an important element of this bill. A lot of the people who are preyed upon by temp agencies are new immigrants, visible minorities, people who are very afraid to pick up the phone and call, because they're fearful of the fact that they will not be called back to work, they won't be paid—and many other reasons, including not knowing about the law. So this is a very, very important aspect of this bill. People should not be fearful, and people watching today, after this bill is passed, should go to work, if they're working through a temp agency, with full confidence, knowing that they're protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for London—Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Before I start, I want to say that we are lucky in the government caucus to have a good whip like Mr. Colle.

I listened to the members from Parry Sound—Muskoka, Beaches—East York, Timmins—James Bay and Brampton

West. To the member from Beaches–East York, this bill is very clear: to protect the workers, to create some kind of protection for people who once worked through a temporary agency, because they need protection. Before this bill, or if the bill does not pass, people would be in two different classes; they would have a different payment. This bill will allow the workers who work through a temporary agency to get the same amount of money and the same vacation time. They'll be paid and protected, and also they will learn about their job before they start work. It's important.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka does not believe in this bill. He believes that by passing this bill we'll create some kinds of barriers. I don't understand it. I think it is our obligation to protect the vulnerable people in this province, not to create obstacles. I think this bill will protect the people and also protect the good temporary agencies who want to work and follow the rules and laws.

Look at what happened in the United States and many different parts of the globe because there is a lack of regulations in the whole world. What happened? We fell into a chaotic situation and a mess economically around the globe. That's why I think, as a responsible government, we should take whatever we have in our power to protect the people and create some kind of protection. Also, I think it's our obligation and duty as a government, as the Ministry of Labour, to protect the vulnerable workers who want to work to feed their families.

I believe that if this bill is passed, it will create those protections. It will make sure that everyone who works in this province will be protected and will get paid. Also, they'll know exactly what they're going to work at and what kind of conditions they are going to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and give the official opposition's leadoff debate. This time it was deferred.

It's a pleasure for me to rise and take part in today's third reading debate of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act—for temporary staffing agencies.

On this side of House, we had high hopes for this bill. We thought that the government might have been serious about wanting to protect workers who were being taken advantage of by unscrupulous temporary agencies. Instead, we got a bill that seems, at its heart, to want to drive the temporary staffing agencies out of business.

Right now, there are in Ontario over 700,000 Ontarians who work through temporary staffing agencies; that is the number, according to ACSESS, which is the Association of Canadian Search, Employment and Staffing Services. People work through temporary agencies for a variety of reasons, and it's not up to us to decide what a good reason is to go the temporary route. People choose temporary routes for various reasons.

At committee, we heard from Frank Wilson of The Employment Solution, who spelled out very clearly why

the industry exists. He said: "Why do our clients hire contract personnel? Because many of Canada's important industries work on a project-based model. It's their nature—not anything controlled or created by ourselves. Aircraft companies work on designing and building new aircraft. High-tech companies work on developing a new piece of software or hardware. Major service corporations plan and carry out a major overhaul of their delivery infrastructure. Energy and natural resource companies build new pipelines or new extraction operations. The list goes on and on.

"During these times, they need specialized skills that they wouldn't need the rest of the time. That's where we come in. We recruit designers, planners, engineers, software designers, and many others too numerous to mention."

The point is that temporary staffing agencies are an important contributor to our economy. Many of Ontario's largest employers rely on temporary workers to make sure they are fully staffed to meet their business plan commitments.

1640

On this side of the House, we agree that there are some in the industry that were not adhering to the best practices, and they need to be straightened out, but this bill goes too far. As a matter of fact, through this entire process the government has done its best to paint the temporary staffing industry as a menace. One of the presenters at committee said, "What has horrified me in this process, listening to all of this, is that our sector is being made out to be some kind of villain. We are absolutely the contrary to that. We are not fraudulent; we are certainly not fly-by-night. We have 20 years' experience, and we have wonderful employees who care every day about what they do."

This is a view shared by many in the industry. I recently received a letter from a company called The Staffing Edge in Brampton, Ontario, where the chief financial officer writes, "We support and have asked government for years to address rogue operators in the staffing business but this bill affects both the staffing industry and business at large. It will both force business to leave the province, stop them from coming here and will greatly reduce the opportunities for young people and new immigrants to enter the workforce."

After sitting through all the committee hearings and the clause-by-clause, I was struck by how consistent the message was from the staffing industry and from individuals who have been helped by the staffing industry as well. Everyone who presented said exactly the same thing: that staffing agencies could, indeed, support this bill if the government agreed to lift the limitation on temp-to-perm conversion fees and eliminated the notion of continuance of employment. We agree on this side of the House, as does the staffing industry, that such things as charging for interview preparation and resumé writing should not be allowed. This bill does address those items, but in the meantime it completely throws the baby out with the bath water. This bill has many flaws that we had

hoped would be corrected through committee. Unfortunately, the government was not interested in any amendments we offered at committee that would have made this bill better and more acceptable to the vast majority of the industry.

The one thing that shone through at the committee hearings was that the majority of staffing agencies were not opposed to this bill in general. In fact, they had hoped that there were ways they could make this bill better and stronger. As I mentioned, my party offered many amendments to Bill 139 that the government would have been wise to adopt. There are also some fatal flaws that we would like to point out again to the government.

The first thing that surprised us was the blanket exemption given to community care access centres. Under Bill 139, the CCACs do not need to follow the same rules that everyone else does if they use temporary workers. This is a case of this government exempting itself from the very same rules of the game, and for no good reason. If the exemption is good enough for firms that have contracts with the CCACs, it should be good enough for all firms that provide personal health service. We heard from a number of these personal health services that have seen their competition be allowed to function under a different set of rules just because they have a contract with the government. We on this side of the House don't think that is fair. If the exemption was granted at all, then it should have been granted to all temporary staffing firms that do business in Ontario, not just those that deal with CCACs.

Comfort Keepers, a temporary staffing firm that provides personal health services, presented to the committee and said, "Comfort Keepers believes that private-pay services and those that are funded publicly should be treated equally under Bill 139. Therefore, our recommendation is that the government broaden and amend section 74.2 to remove that unfair playing field, and we put the language in there. The option of both private and public care is very important to Ontario residents and, quite frankly, nothing should systemically create an inequality between these two."

In true McGuinty government fashion, they chose to ignore this advice and create an unlevel playing field in the personal health services sector.

Through the course of the debate on Bill 139 and through the committee stage, it became clear to me just how important temporary agencies are to the economic well-being of Ontario. One firm pointed out that if temporary agencies are not in a position to help Ontario's employers meet their temporary staffing requirements when the economy picks up, firms will therefore not be able to respond as quickly as they should.

In committee, we heard from Nicolette Mueller, representing Adecco, who said, "At a time when the state of the economy demands removing us to temporary employment, certain parts of Bill 139 do the exact opposite. In fact, it will become costlier for companies to hire agencies and thereby impair their ability to respond to those unpredictable times." In effect, this bill could actually slow down any economic recovery.

Of course, nothing will slow down the recovery quite like the new Dalton sales tax, which will put an 8% tax on almost everything we use in our day-to-day lives, including, I would like to point out, temporary staffing agencies, which the DST will apply to—yet another cost on those businesses.

I was very impressed with a presentation from Kathryn Tremblay, who runs a staffing firm in the Ottawa Valley. As she said, "Specifically, our average assignments last 18.81 weeks. Based on applying the rules, it would take us 22.8 weeks to actually break even on our assignments. That means that we would lose 0.7% on every candidate that we place on an 18-week assignment. We would not be able to stay in business under those circumstances. Or we could pass on the cost to our client, the client being the employer. As Kelly Harbridge from Magna said—one of the employers that uses temporary agencies to a great extent—I don't believe any company in Ontario right now can absorb an extra 5% or 6% cost for a temporary worker. This is not the time for us, in this economy, to go to our client and say, 'Oh, by the way, can you pay another 5% or 6%?'"

Throughout this debate, I have met with people on both sides of this debate about this bill. Many people saw common ground on this bill, yet the government refused to budge or accept any amendment.

One of the most important issues raised by the staffing industry had to do with the notion of continuance of employment.

In committee, the official opposition moved to delete subsection 74.4(2) from the bill. We believe that this section created and implied "continuance of employment" while not on assignment, which, in turn, constructs an inconsistency between the employer's obligation and the reality of the employment context. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that will have this rule if this bill is passed.

This is the clause that fundamentally proves the government does not understand the temporary staffing industry. According to ACSESS, "It creates a different and higher standard for staffing company employers, and creates a higher cost burden and liabilities for temporary staffing companies compared to all other agencies in every other industry."

What this does is deem an employee terminated if they have not been on assignment for 37 consecutive weeks. Essentially, if that happens, the temporary staffing agency will be on the hook for severance or separation pay. This could happen regardless of whether the person who was on assignment—whether they knew they were going to be going back or on another assignment at all.

I was told that if at the end of the assignment an agency doesn't sever a summer student, for example, that agency, in 37 weeks, could be liable for a severance payment to that student, whether or not the student had any intention of wanting another temporary assignment. It would be a good summer job. It would be a great way to go back to school, I guess.

Here's an example provided by Adecco staffing services to the committee:

"Take the example of the temporary workers we assign to one of our clients' state-of-the-art warehouse distribution centres in the GTA. The client is a large national retailer, and our temporary workers assist with shipping and receiving merchandise during this retailer's Christmas rush. Their assignments usually start early in the fall and continue through into January, after which point the client flexes back down to its core group of permanent employees until late spring when business peaks again"—if it does this year; it might be doubtful, as this could be a different year for a lot of employers in this province. "At this point, some of the same temporary workers may be offered a second assignment there. Some may accept and some may not. Possible reasons for not accepting a second assignment are numerous. People move or find employment elsewhere. They may be travelling or at school or may have decided to stay home with children during summer months"—all personal choices by individuals. Every individual will make a different choice. "Regardless, even though they're not available to work, this deems them to be continuously employed and accruing tenure. Then, 35 weeks later"—after the clock's been ticking all that time—"that employee is entitled to one week's termination pay. Any other employer would not be liable for this amount, but Adecco would."

1650

We wanted to put in the legislation a clause that would make it very clear to temporary staffing agencies that nothing in the bill took away their rights to sever or terminate an employee at the end of an assignment. According to one of the agencies that presented at the committee, this issue alone could put up the cost of using temporary agencies by over 8%.

Again, I would say to the government that you are making it more expensive to do business in the province of Ontario, and you will be making it harder and harder for us to recover from this recession if and when it ever comes to an end.

Of course, what this government did—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: And I hear my good friend from Peterborough—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Be optimistic.

Mr. Robert Bailey: "Be optimistic," he says. Be optimistic. It's very hard, at this time, with all the gloom and doom that's in the papers. I would say that a lot of it is brought forth by policies, not necessarily just from this government but the world recession as well, but it's hard for someone to be optimistic. I always like to see the glass as half full as opposed to half empty.

Mr. Jeff Leal: There you go. You're an optimist.

Mr. Robert Bailey: There you go. I'm an optimist. As they said, I'm an optimist. The member from Peterborough reminded me that I'm an optimist.

That leads me to my next remark. Of course, what this government did with the recent budget will also make it harder to recover. We shouldn't be surprised, when they tried to drive the stake through the heart of a legitimate

industry just to placate some of their friends in this province.

This is a government that recently announced a record deficit, with no concern for the long-term effect on our economy—\$18 billion over two years, and that's just a start. They could have encouraged Ontarians to buy new vehicles just by offering a PST holiday on new vehicle purchases. We suggested that. This would have encouraged car sales. It probably would have led to new salesmen coming from a temporary agency. Those temporary agencies could have provided sales agents to go and work in these car dealers. The car dealers would have been swamped with new car sales. They wouldn't have been able to keep up with the orders. I understand that the last time something like this was done, it was in place for approximately three months and it led to a 17% increase in sales on those car lots. Just imagine: Now these temporary agencies could provide salespeople to those agencies and they could take advantage of that.

This is a government that recently announced a record deficit, with no concern for the long-term effect on our economy. They could have encouraged Ontarians to buy new vehicles just by offering that PST holiday on new vehicle purchases. This was a concrete suggestion that our caucus made to them, but they didn't listen, again. We told them again and again. It sounds like an old nursery rhyme.

The best way to bail out the auto industry is to get people to buy cars. That is what they should be focused on. We need to get industry working again. We need to get people spending money. When they spend money, they'll go to these temporary agencies. They would employ people that might lead from temporary to permanent jobs. That is what they should be focused on. Instead, they spend their time on these feel-good bills that try to solve problems that don't exist.

Since I have been elected, I have not had one person call my office about their treatment by a temporary agency. As a matter of fact, since being a member of provincial Parliament, I have in fact relied on temporary agencies to find temporary staff for my constituency office. Not only was my experience a good one, I actually hired the person who was on assignment full-time, so they were an example of going from temporary to permanent. I was a shining example, something that the government side of the House could have taken some vision from. I know that the member from Peterborough would agree with me on that. I think he's nodding yes. Anyway, he could agree with me on that.

Not only was my experience a good one, I also hired that person who was on assignment full-time. The agency that I used was Express Employment Professionals. They were easy to deal with, they were fair, and I was very happy with the person that they sent to me. At that time, I asked the owner of Express, Mr. Bruce Hein, what his comments were on the bill. He spoke quite passionately about one section that he felt certain was going to have a very negative impact on his business. That is the section dealing with the prohibition of fees that agencies are able to charge.

In a letter to Minister Fonseca, Mr. Hein wrote: "Section 74.8, paragraph 8 of subsection (1) and exception (2) limit a temporary help agency from charging a fee to a client in connection with the services provided. The client is always a company or an organization and is never the worker or candidate.

"Controlling financial business terms between a staffing service and client represents a misapplication of employment standards legislation in the area of consumer and commercial transactions.

"The Employment Standards Act governs the relationship between employers and employees in Ontario. The act should not be misused to interfere with established contractual business agreements between staffing firms and their clients.

"Temporary help services incur significant advertising, recruitment, background/screening, risk and other overhead costs and should be permitted to offer their services to clients without the government's arbitrary interventions, limitations and restrictions upon legitimate business terms."

But it would be totally foreign to this government to not intrude and insert themselves in traditional business transactions normally contracted every day throughout this fine province and this country.

"This provision fails to provide"—these are Mr. Hein's words, actually, not mine. I kind of interjected mine there. Anyway, I don't want to attribute remarks to him that I made. Those remarks were mine.

Mr. Hein went on to say: "This provision fails to provide any meaningful benefit to low-wage workers and will significantly damage the largest percentage of the industry providing important service in the areas of information technology, accounting, engineering, medical services and other professional services. These amendments will cause significant hardship and irreparable harm to staffing service companies and, by extension, clients and candidates."

The official opposition and I completely agree with Mr. Hein on this. We moved in committee to strike out the section of the bill that prohibits companies from charging fees.

Also during committee, we heard from Mr. Peter Jeewan of the Lannick Group, a staffing agency that specializes in placing accounting professionals. Here's what he had to say about temp-to-perm fees: "The draft bill addresses temp-to-perm fees as a barrier to employment. I can tell you unequivocally that we have never encountered a situation where a candidate lost a permanent job opportunity because of a temp-to-perm fee. These types of fees are a long-standing and generally accepted part of an efficient fee structure in the industry across the world. They allow clients to pay for services in the manner that they intend to use them."

He says, going further: "Restricting our ability to charge temp-to-perm fees means that we will have to recover our recruitment/acquisition costs by charging higher hourly margins. This will boost the cost of knowledge workers to companies and may even result in

reductions to these hourly workers as firms seek to expand margins to compensate for lost temp-to-perm fees. We maintain that these fees are the domain of the free market system." And they should be left that way.

It was interesting to me that this is the only section of the Employment Standards Act that sets out how businesses deal with each other. The Employment Standards Act is a bill that regulates how employers deal with employees, not how one business deals with another, but now, if this bill is passed as written, it will.

I would also question the constitutionality of governments regulating what type of agreement two businesses may enter into when it comes to temporary staffing. I'm sure that this issue is one that will find its way before the courts sooner or later.

This government should have listened to professionals in the industry and strengthened the bill. Instead, they ignored the advice they were given and are now about to drive a stake through the heart of the staffing industry, just when we could use those types of industries as we try to recover from this recession, which is going to be with us for at least the next year or so. When Ontario industry and small and large businesses could use these temporary staffing agencies to recover from this recession, we're going to be placed at a disadvantage.

1700

Those are my comments as the leadoff speaker for the official opposition on this. We look forward to hearing further debate on this. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Sarnia over those 22½ minutes that he spent describing the bill, and I kept waiting to hear him talk about workers, because I thought that's what this bill was about. In 22½ minutes, I have to tell him that I never heard him once mention workers, save and except—save and except—when he talked about using a temporary agency to hire a worker in his office, whom he subsequently hired.

Now, I thought that the bill was an important bill. I thought that the bill was to help solve the problems of the many people in this province who are being ripped off by temporary agencies. I will acknowledge that the member from Sarnia has good things to say about some of the temporary agencies and the work they do in order to match employees with employers, but he spent his entire time talking about those employers and how they were going to not benefit from this particular bill, how it was going to make it more difficult for them to make a bigger profit. He never once spoke on the other side, which I think is an important thing.

I hope he will, in the two minutes that he is granted at the end, talk about the effects that the bill will have on employees: on those people who have been subjected, in some cases, to abuse; in the cases of some people where they have not been paid; in the cases of some people where they have not been allowed to take full-time jobs;

in the cases of some people where they have literally seen their careers and their futures be absorbed by the employer and not allowed to go forward. I think that that is what the real intent of the bill is.

I listened to him as well when he talked about the home care agency workers and how somehow it was a good thing that the home care agency workers will not be given that same sort of advantage that workers in other fields will be given. That's his two minutes. I hope he will answer those questions or make comment on what I've asked.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I learned a bit, listening to this presentation by the member from Sarnia—Lambton, our critic for this portfolio. One thing he reminded us of is a number of flaws within this legislation, Bill 139. When we're discussing the whole issue of temporary health agencies, especially in this present changing climate, it's important that we get this right.

I do know that the member from Sarnia—Lambton put forward a number of recommendations, put forward amendments during committee hearings, to improve this piece of legislation. None of those amendments were accepted by the government—rejected out of hand. It raises the issue for us: Why would we consider voting in favour of this piece of legislation when any ideas that have been put forward to improve it didn't make the grade?

One concern that I have: There's a double standard. We know that small organizations, for example, that are struggling with human resource issues, given the economic climate they're in right now, need that kind of flexibility to access people to come in and help. They have to follow the rules. They're going to be following a lot more rules with respect to this legislation and any regulations that come along with it. As we realize, CCACs don't have to follow those rules; they're exempt. CCACs, as you would know, Speaker, are the community care access centres. Our question is, why would community care access centres be exempt and a small company have follow these kinds of guidelines?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's an old song in the labour movement. It goes something like this: "Which side are you on?" I've got to say, you've clearly decided which side you're on, but I guess that's fair. There are different sides to every story, people need representation on both sides of issues, and clearly you're saying that temporary agencies are a great thing and should continue in the province of Ontario. I disagree, but clearly you know the song well, "Which side are you on?" I just want to let you know that I sing a very different verse than you when it comes to this particular issue, as I do with most labour issues.

I will agree with the member that you have to have bills in the Legislature that are bills that, yes, protect workers but at the same time try to provide an atmos-

phere so that people are prepared to invest in the province of Ontario. But here's the issue: If entrepreneurs in this province are able to start businesses and have to follow the same laws as every other entrepreneur in the province of Ontario, why should the workers be any different? In this province today, as it will be once we finish this bill at third reading, a worker who works as a permanent employee of an employer, who is hired as a permanent employee, has a different level of protection under the law than a worker who works for a temporary agency—and is that right? That, to me, says that there are two different classes of workers, and that is clearly wrong. For this member to argue that we should continue that practice—I want to say I totally disagree. If entrepreneurs in this province have to follow the same laws as every other entrepreneur in the province of Ontario and they're subject to exactly the same laws, why shouldn't workers get the same protection? If we have an Employment Standards Act and we think it's good for permanent employees in this province, why should employees who work for temporary agencies not have the same protection as other workers? That's the question. To me, it's a question of fundamental rights, and I think all workers should be treated the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Again, the intention of this bill is to make the employment situations, the environment for temporary agency workers better. In doing that, one aspect of this bill that goes a long way is that temp agency employees will have to be advised by their temp agency in writing about the where, what and when and how much they'll be paid. One of the repetitive complaints that I got was that people answered advertisements where they were offered \$500 to \$1,000 per week, not knowing the job and where they would have to go for this or how much they would be paid. It wasn't nearly the \$500 or the \$1,000. These were, at times, very labour-intensive jobs, and the aspect of not knowing made it even more difficult. So this is one element which will go a long way in addressing this issue.

Again, it's the vulnerable people, new immigrants and visible minorities who are preyed upon by these temp agencies, and those are the types of situations we're after. We're not after the good employment agencies that follow the rules and all the laws of the Employment Standards Act, which we feel should be enforced and which this bill tries to do.

I want to thank everyone who has spoken on this. Again, it's about fairness, which is precisely what this bill intends to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay—I got that right this time; I apologize for my missing on the geography there, before—also Beaches—East York, Haldimand—Norfolk and Brampton West. Thank you for all of your comments. It's nice to

know where you stand and who you're with and who you're not with. What I was trying to do was explain the other side of the equation, because we did hear from a number of the temporary staffing agencies that felt they were being unfairly maligned, and, like I said, they admitted themselves that there were some rogue organizations out there. There's no one who wants to see those rogue organizations out of business any more than they do, because they feel it takes away from the job they're trying to do.

1710

They did try and talk about the costs that it was going to load onto their businesses, the difficulty it would make for them carrying on business during this recession, trying to bring Ontario out of the recession, because they will be used. The temporary agencies will hopefully be something that industry will look to, and the opportunities to go from temporary to permanent. I did hear a lot of people come in and make some very great presentations, the employees as well. My thoughts are also with them. They need an opportunity to work with these temporary agencies. If they're not full-time jobs, then we need temporary agencies that can give them the opportunities to get the experience. It should be a good experience. They should be well paid. There should be decent working conditions. One day, hopefully, either in that industry or in another industry, they'll have received the experience and the proper training, and they will have the opportunity to go from temporary to permanent.

I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to speak to Bill 139. Just by way of a little bit of background, long before there were temporary agencies or long before there was such a prolific number of them, governments and other businesses used other measures in order to try to control workers, to try to pay less wages, to try to produce less-than-ideal working conditions. I even remember myself, going back into the early 1970s, getting a job with the federal government of Canada. Now, you would think that the federal government of Canada would be one of these ideal and idyllic employers which would have a wonderful workplace and would treat its workers with respect. In fact, to a large matter that was not true, because when I joined the federal civil service back in 1973—I believe the date was February 26, if my memory is correct—having graduated from university, I was hired on, like every other civil servant, in a casual employee status. The government used this casual status to great benefit, because when they hired you as a casual, they only had to keep you on for up to six months, and at the end of six months you could be laid off for a single day, and then they would hire you back. Then you would have casual status again for another six months, and this might go on ad infinitum.

Once in a while, the federal government would hold competitions amongst the casual employees to determine which ones merited to become permanent employees,

and those lucky few—the 3%, 4%, 5% or 10%, whatever it was at the time—who were deemed to be, by the management, the cream of the crop could sit the competition, could answer the questions and could hope to be made permanent.

Over the years, a lot of people came into the federal civil service that way, and it was in the early 1980s—by this time I was a permanent employee—that the unions started to fight against what we considered to be an unfair practice, because you had half of the employees who had permanent status, who had stability within their workplace, who weren't laid off every six months for one day only to be hired back, who had all the benefits of a full employee, and then you had the rest of them, many of whom they had worked side by side with for years and years, who had nothing of the sort. They took the matter to court and they won, because the court said that, for all intents and purposes, these were permanent employees. These were people who were working in the same workplace, doing the same jobs, getting paid roughly the same amount of money, and they deserved the same protections of having permanent employment and the opportunity to join the union.

I'm digressing a bit from the bill because I think this is pretty much the same thing that's happening today. You don't have governments anymore that can afford to do things that the courts in the past have said are illegal, but you have governments and employers in general that are trying to find ways around the legality of the law, and they have found one in the temporary employment agencies. The same way that governments, both federally and, I believe, provincially as well, used to use casual employment, you now have companies in the government and the private sector using the same thing with casual employees. The loophole needs to be closed because the loophole is fundamentally unfair to a whole broad class of people. Back in my day, in the 1970s, it was unfair to women, it was unfair to visible minorities and it was unfair to young people. Those were the people who were hired on as casuals, and those were the people who most often kept that status over a long period of time. Those of us who were lucky enough to get permanent employ were mostly older adult white males. Today the same thing is true. I commend the government for bringing forward this bill—because there are some good parts in the bill—because we have to close that loophole. It is no longer fair in this society to ask people of colour, to ask new immigrants, to ask women, to ask young people to accept any less than what the rest of us accept as normal daily work practice.

We in the NDP can support this bill because it does a number of good things. It ends the fees that are charged to workers by temporary assignment agencies. Not only do some of these agencies go out and recruit and try to find people to fill vacancies in slots in companies, but they charge most of these would-be workers a fee to do so. They charge them an exorbitant amount. I remember quite clearly a few years ago that my colleague who works in my office—her son went to a temporary agency

because he was looking for a summer job, and he found what he thought was a summer job through the agency. But when he went into the agency to try to get located, they asked him for hundreds of dollars in order to be placed in a job. And then there was an ongoing fee, and there were training fees and there were uniform fees; and to the everlasting credit of this young man, he stood up in the middle of all of this, in a room full of largely immigrant people, and he announced to all of them that this was a rip-off and that they should all flee that place in a great hurry because the company was trying, in effect, to extort the desperation of new workers, people who were anxious to get a job. He convinced some of them to leave along with him. He said that he needed to explain to them that the process that they were following in their hope to get a job was not a good one and that they should in fact leave, and some of them did leave with him. And he was absolutely correct.

So when the government seeks to end the fees, that is a good thing. I don't think anyone should for a moment think that people who are desperate to get a job and who go to these agencies should have to pay a fee, especially when the job is often not delivered.

The second thing that the bill purports to end is the reducing of barriers to permanent work for temporary agency workers. This is a huge thing that has to be done. People go into a workplace. They have training. They have abilities. The workplace did not find them themselves. They go to work, and a boss or bosses or management or supervisors look at them and say, "This is a good employee. This is an employee that, if we had had gone out and hired ourselves, we would have been anxious to have. They have proven, in the period of time"—over six or eight or 10 or 12 weeks, or whatever the matter is—"that they are capable of doing the job, and we want to hire them permanently." And, you know, you have to pay a fee. You have to pay a fee to the company. These people are practically indentured. They cannot get out of the contract. I think that by trying to reduce the barrier to permanent work for temporary agency workers, this is a good thing, because it gives people the permanence and stability of a real job. It allows them to work alongside their fellow employees and get paid the same amount of money, to have the same benefits and, if possible and if unionized, to join the union as well. So this part of the bill is a good thing.

The next part of the bill that I think is worthy of support is that it ensures that everybody gets holiday pay. We have all read in newspapers of people who are hired on temporary contracts who go in and work the day before and the day after a holiday, and all of a sudden, when they're about to leave or when they're told they can't be working there anymore or when their time is up, they're told they're not getting paid for that holiday. What a disgraceful thing that is. In this province, we have 10 or 11 holiday days that are paid to literally everyone who works, and there should be no difference between people who are temporarily employed and those who are employed full-time. Holiday pay is statutory. That's what

it says: It's statutory. It must be paid, and it must be observed by all people in the province of Ontario. So I think that all temporary agencies should be paying workers, and all workers should be getting that, whether on assignment or laid off from the assignment. The holiday pay is an essential thing that they have for statutory holidays, but it's also an essential thing that they have in terms of the Labour Relations Act, that they get 2% at the closure of their term or contract.

1720

Another thing in the bill that I think we should be supporting is that we require agencies to give workers information about the assignments and their basic rights. Oftentimes, as I started out to say, the agency people hire new immigrants, people who are looking for a first job, looking for a first opportunity in Ontario, a first opportunity in Canada to get Canadian experience. They go to the agency because it's very difficult—and I know this from my time in immigration—for a new immigrant whose first language is not necessarily English or French but who is somewhat fluent in the language, to go out there and to try to get a job in the field for which they have been trained or to which they aspire. It's a very difficult thing, and they often don't understand about the assignment or about the basic rights that they have. It is important, and this bill will require agencies to give people those first rights.

I do know, to digress just a little, when I worked at Canada immigration at Pearson airport back in the 1970s, part of my job at that time, every single day when the planes came in, was to land new immigrants. They would come, they would proffer their documents; it was immigration form 1,000. They would sit before the immigration officer, me, and oftentimes be very nervous because they were coming to a new place. They got asked a lot of questions, they had to answer them, they had to sign the document, and I had to stamp their passport. But in the end, we always welcomed them to Canada; we tried to assuage their fears. I oftentimes took a minute or so to give them some advice. That advice was how to go out there and find a job, and not to take the first the one offered to them but one that truly reflected their abilities. I would ask them what kind of work they did in the countries from whence they came—be it Jamaica, Portugal, Great Britain or Germany or from the far-flung corners of the earth—what kind of job they did there, how much it paid there, and how much they could probably expect to earn here.

I remember on one particular occasion having a young woman who said that she did legal secretarial work and that she worked in Britain. She was very concerned about whether she could get that kind of work, and she told me what her salary was. I know that with her qualifications, her salary in Britain at that time was much less than she would be making in Canada. I remember talking to her for a few minutes and convincing her how much salary she should be going out to look for, and not to be conned into taking the first job or the first agency that came along but to actually look for a job that would pay her the

going rate in Canada. I did this many times, but with this particular young woman, about six or eight months later I met her again because she came to work for the immigration department itself as a court reporter. That's the kind of skills she had in being able to transcribe materials. She came to work as a court reporter and she asked, "Do you remember me?" Of course I did, and she thanked me for the advice because she did get a job with a legal firm, but she almost immediately got a job with the immigration department to make even more.

My reason for telling this story is that it behooves all of us to tell new immigrants about their skills, to recognize those skills and to encourage them to seek the kind of payments that should be paid, rather than sending people off to temporary agencies where they will work for far less under much more trying conditions than they might ordinarily if they can obtain a full-time job.

I also agree that temporary workers should be given termination and severance protections, and that is contained within the body of this bill, and that the bill will require that both agency and client companies are legally responsible when a worker is penalized for trying to enforce their rights. All of these aspects of the bill are good aspects. Under those aspects, I think the bill should be supported.

I do know that there are agencies—and I will speak to the agencies for a minute—that are not pleased. My friend the member from Sarnia did quote one agency. He quoted it by name, and I actually have the same letter; they sent it to me, too. The Staffing Edge is very unhappy with the bill. The bill, in the first paragraph, makes a statement, and I agree with this statement—well, I don't agree with the statement, but I do agree with the facts contained within this statement. It says, "It will both force businesses to leave the province, stop them from coming here and will greatly reduce the opportunities for young people and new immigrants to enter the workforce." The part I agree with is that they recognize full well that it is young people and new immigrants who are their chief clients. The body of the statement I made before was to recognize that those are the people who are being most greatly affected.

The author of this Staffing Edge letter, Mr. Victor Winney, CMA, chief financial officer, goes on to criticize the bill and says—and again I don't agree with what he says—"This bill is so irrational and convoluted that we are not sure if any staffing service can comply. The staffing industry has offered very constructive suggestions but has been totally rebuffed."

I have to say that the agencies and the industry will have to learn to work around this rule, just as agencies and industries have learned to work around other rules. We are now in the process of seeing what is going to happen to all of those overnight lending industries, and they're all saying that they're all going to go bankrupt. I'm not sure that they are all going to go bankrupt, but we cannot allow usury to happen, and we cannot allow exploitation to happen. Those companies that are good companies will be able to learn from this bill, will be able

to comply with this bill and will be able to continue business. Those that are fly-by-night operations will be driven from business, and I for one will not shed a single tear for those businesses that are removed from business that are in an exploitive situation, that are exploiting the needs and the fears of new immigrants, young people, women and those looking for their first job.

I have four minutes left. I have spoken about the benefits of the bill for 16 minutes. I wish to tell the government a few things that I think they could have done better and should have done better in this bill, because part of the critique, even when you're supporting a bill, is to tell them how they could have done it better. There are four things that I think could have been done to make a good bill a great bill. Of those four things, the first one is that the bill does not protect workers who use agencies for permanent job placements; temporary placements, yes, but not permanent job placements. Bill 139 should have been expanded to protect these workers from scams and unfair fees. It is important to protect all workers, whether they are out there trying to get a job, as my friend from Sarnia said, for an average of 18.1 weeks, or whether they are trying to get a permanent job. It should have encompassed all of them; it did not. Perhaps in a little while this government or a future government may look upon this and expand the nature of the bill. It's one of the things that I think should have been included.

The second thing that should have been done is that home care agency workers should not have to wait three more years before they get termination and severance rights. I do not understand the rationale behind this government. I do not understand, upon listening to the CCACs and others who said that home care workers who come from temporary agencies should be treated differently, why this is the case. In almost literally every single case—and certainly I know from my own experience in Beaches-East York and in Toronto—these home care workers, temporary ones, are women and people of visible minorities. You know it. That's who they are. They are not going to be given the same rights and the same privileges. I don't understand why. I thought that was who we were trying to protect. Why do they have to wait three years? Why is it not possible? Because contracts were signed? No contracts have been signed. But why is it not possible for this government to enforce the legislation so that on the day this bill is proclaimed into law they have the same rights as every other individual?

The third thing I think should have been contained within the body of the bill and was not was that temporary agencies should tell workers in writing what the expected length of the assignment will be and also make the markup fee transparent, so that when workers go in they know that it's only a two-week assignment. The markup fee, whatever is being charged, should be put in front so that the worker knows how much the temporary agency is charging the company, usually because that corresponds to how much less the company pays them. They're not going to pay them the markup fee plus the same salary as their own employees. So I think that's

only fair that that be known. I don't know why that has been hidden. I don't know why the government did not include that. They should have and could have, but they did not; had they done so, a good bill would have been a better bill.

1730

Last but not least, Bill 139 would let agencies charge a fee to companies if workers are hired directly by companies in the first six months of an assignment. I don't know why this continues to be there. If a worker is a good worker, if the company recognizes how good they are, if they want to make them permanent on their staff, it is a barrier to the permanent employee when the government allows for a fee to be charged directly when they are there for less than six months. In most cases, companies will know within three or four weeks, a month, two months at the outside, whether or not the employee fits into their company and whether or not they should be hired. To pay a fee after six months is tantamount to not having that person who is a good employee hired.

Those would be my comments, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to follow the comments of my colleague from Beaches–East York. I'd just like to add a personal observation here.

I've been privileged to have as my seatmate, for the five years in which I've been elected, the member for Brampton West. In the course of one's parliamentary career, there are probably a handful of things that you can say that, by and large, as a member you did that and it was enacted by the government and it's going to make a big difference to a lot of people. So for the people in Brampton and especially for the member for Brampton West, he can look just about anybody in the eye and say, "When it came to cleaning up some of the abuses of temporary workers, that was something I had the privilege of contributing to." Good on the member from Brampton West, and people should say, "Thank you, Vic Dhillon."

There's one point I'd just like to dwell on, and that's one of the things that Bill 139 does uniquely well. If you're taking an assignment from a temporary agency, Bill 139 says that the agency has to give you reasonable details about the work: for example, to provide employees, in writing, with the name and address of who they're going to go and work for; some description of the client's contact information when they're offered a work assignment; the wages, the benefits, the hours of work, the pay schedule, some things which had not been regulated and are now regulated, some things where people had deliberately or accidentally played fast and loose, where the new regulations say, "No, you've got to provide a temporary worker these things," and, finally, a general description of what kind of work they're going to be doing, because people should know, to the limit of the agency's ability, what kind of work they're going to do when they're sent out on a temporary assignment.

That's just one facet of the benefits of Bill 139 and why it deserves passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm incredibly pleased to be part of this debate today. When I first got out of university and was looking for work on Parliament Hill, I tried my hand at temporary work for a couple of months until I landed that big job, making next to nothing on Parliament Hill. When I did that, I found it was great. It was flexible. It provided great opportunity. It allowed me to find new skills.

Years later, of course—10 years, to be precise—I had the opportunity to go back just this year to see Isabelle Copeland of Harrington Staffing in Ottawa. What a tremendous honour it was for me to go there, look at her and say, "Thank you. I've now become your MPP."

It's that type of opportunity in Ontario that we must foster. By adding more burdens on small and medium-sized staffing companies, we may put them out of business. I don't mean "we" as in the official opposition; I mean "we" in this Legislature, which is dominated and controlled by the Liberal Party.

We heard several concerns from Isabelle and her colleagues about what this bill, if not modified and amended properly, would do to her agency and other agencies like hers. My colleague Bob Bailey and the official opposition moved to delete section 74.4 from the bill because we believe that this section creates an implied so-called continuance of employment while not on assignment, which in turn constructs an inconsistency between employers' obligations and the reality of the employment context. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that has this rule. At a time when we need able-bodied young men and women in the workforce, we cannot close these temporary agencies down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to congratulate my friend and colleague the member from Beaches–East York. He raised, I thought, a good personal perspective in regard to what this type of legislation, if properly done, could lead to, and that is making sure that workers are not treated as two different classes of workers; I think that's the point he was trying to make. He spoke of the example of the young woman who was immigrating back to Canada and about how he had advised her of what her rights—not so much rights but what she should be looking for when it comes to employment, and eventually she took that advice, moved forward and got herself a very good job in the end, which says that we as a society have a responsibility. So if individuals in this society can take responsibility towards assisting people in making the proper decisions when it comes to employment, certainly to God this Legislature can help by having a template which is legislation that treats workers not as two different classes of workers. I guess that's the problem that I have with where the government is going in the end with this legislation.

Again, is what they're trying to do bad? Obviously not. I congratulate the member across the way from

Brampton for the work that he has done. There have been a lot of members, such as Cheri DiNovo from Parkdale-High Park, who had been working on this issue along with you and others, and you've been trying to raise what is a real issue. There is a preponderance of new Canadians who are being preyed upon by temporary work agencies to do work that would normally be done by full-time employees, and we need to protect those people who are not as informed on the laws of Canada and not as likely to ask for their legal rights to be maintained because, as new immigrants, they may be worried about repercussions because of the experiences they have had in their previous countries. Does this legislation go as far as it needs to? No. Is it a step in the right direction? Yes. I only hope that one day all workers will be treated with the same courtesy and respect by the law of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity once again to comment on Bill 139. I have certainly heard from some people who are in business who are concerned that this bill, if passed, will negatively affect the workers that it's intended to protect. That's true in the home care sector. As was pointed out by our critic, the CCACs, the community care access centres, are going to be exempted from this bill, and yet those small private businesses that are in the business of providing personal health services are not exempt. I received a letter from Home Instead Senior Care, where they point out that:

"One serious impact this legislation could have on the home care industry is that our trained caregivers could be hired away by clients to work on an independent basis after six months without penalty. This would drastically change if the oversight by our providers was easily eliminated. Providers invest a significant amount of resources to make sure seniors are provided with quality care. Without this quality assurance, seniors' safety and security are at risk.

"It is my understanding that this bill applies to private home care providers, but it exempts CCAC-funded home health care providers. Both providers are employers; the only difference is that one is publicly funded and the other is solely private-pay. Neither fall in the category of temporary care agencies."

So this is pointing out how this legislation will negatively affect services for our seniors who are trying to stay at home and be provided for. I'm glad that I have received this letter. I didn't get a chance to read the whole thing so that I could get it on the record. That was from Sharon Galway, who is the managing director of Home Instead Senior Care, and she does have many other points that hopefully I can get in next time around.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member from Beaches-East York to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There was a time when I sat in that chair, as you

are sitting there tonight, and there was a time when I lamented that the members, in the two minutes' opportunity to question and comment on the debater, would not do so, and I must say again tonight that I don't know whether any of them were listening to me.

I thank them for their comments, the members from Mississauga-Streetsville, Nepean-Carleton, Parry Sound-Muskoka—and I'll get to the member from Timmins-James Bay last—but all three of them stood up and spoke not one word about what I had to say.

The member for Mississauga-Streetsville quite rightly pointed out that the member from Brampton West had had a hand the initial stage, and that's correct, but it was nothing that I spoke about. The member from Nepean-Carleton talked about 74.4 and her colleague from Sarnia and how he tried to delete that section of the bill, but I did not say anything about that at all. And the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka talk about home care, CCACs and Mr. Bailey's role in the committee, again to which did I not speak.

So I guess I'm bound to talk to the member from Timmins-James Bay. I thank him for at least listening to my small story of the new immigrant who was coming to Canada from Britain and the role that I tried to play in educating her, her husband and her family in terms of what to expect in Ontario and the kind of job that she could do and what to expect in terms of remuneration. That's what I'm hoping this bill will do. That's what I'm hoping the temporary agencies will do. I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their comments, but I am hoping that in the future, against all hope, the comments will be made reflecting on the debate that preceded them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Beaches-East York for reminding all members of this House that questions and comments are supposed to relate back to the original member's presentation and not just be on any subject. If I was remiss in not enforcing that standing order rule, to the member for Beaches-East York I apologize, but I would take this opportunity again to remind all members that that's the way it's supposed to work.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: According to my chief opposition whip, I am the temporary stand-in for Joyce Savoline, the member from Burlington, who unfortunately cannot be here at the present moment. She's at a Big Brothers charity event. As we all know, Ms. Savoline is a wonderful member here and has lots of experience.

As I mentioned previously, and just to note the previous speaker—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Big Sisters as well.

In any event, I must admit it's very difficult to concentrate on my remarks that Ms. Savoline has so kindly prepared for me with so much exchange going on to my left. Of course, those of us on the right of the political spectrum will not be supporting Bill 139. We will not be supporting Bill 139 as a result of the government not listening to the people who requested amendments, those

stakeholders that the minister is so fond of speaking with that he apparently doesn't listen to.

Ms. Savoline, of course, is absolutely flabbergasted, as am I, that every other province in the nation at this very tough economic time is turning their attention to helping businesses, yet consistently with the Minister of Labour we see job-killing policies, whether it's rushing through that minimum wage three times in a very short period of time or Bill 139.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're starting to sound like Mike Harris.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, I can honestly say to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay that I am a big fan of his.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I kind of figured.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You know I am on a personal level, but we must remember that while Mike Harris was the Premier of this great province, over one million jobs were created because of his business-friendly, family-friendly and middle-class-friendly policies. Yet what we've got on the other side is a government who chooses consistently to put pieces of legislation like this at our feet so that we see those 200,000, 300,000, 400,000 jobs leave this province. In the months of January and February alone in this great province, once the economic engine of Canada, over 100,000 jobs were lost. How does this government respond? With job-killing policies.

Let me give you a few examples. The HST that we're about to face or, as some of my colleagues call it, the Dalton sales tax, is going hurt consumer confidence. It's not good for small business.

We've got a Green Energy Act before us, which is essentially a tax and power grab, which is going to outline—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to make sure the member from Nepean knows that she's supposed to be speaking to Bill 139 before us, and she should stay on that bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All members have to speak to the bill that's being debated in the House.

I return to the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me just go on a little bit longer because it does show a picture, because what it is—we've got the very forceful increase in the minimum wage in a short period of time. That's job-killing. We've got the Green Energy Act or, as we like to call it, the tax and power grab, which could, if implemented the way Mr. Smitherman, the Minister of Energy, wants it to, increase energy bills by as much as 30% to 50%. How's that good for a small business man or a medium-sized business man?

Then you've got Bill 139 here, which is essentially going to administratively kill those people who are trying and attempting to give people the skills to find full-time employment, the connections to find full-time employment and the flexibility for those in the province who would choose to work in a different set of circumstances than most of us.

As I said to the previous speaker who talked about a new Canadian, there was once upon a time when I was a new Ontarian, when I first came to this province with \$200 in my pocket and was sleeping on my friend's sofa, because I knew you could get a better life in Ontario. Now, kids like me are moving to Saskatchewan. But there was once a time when that was the first place I could look to find employment in this province before I worked on Parliament Hill. It was a great head start.

I had the tremendous opportunity to go see Isabelle Copeland a few weeks back to thank her for that, to do a tour of Harrington Staffing and see what kind of obstacles are faced by her and her company. I was pleasantly surprised to see the great strides they're taking not only in trying to find and match people who need a job and who want a job to a potential employer, but also what they're doing with workplace safety. These are tremendous employers. It's always when Mr. McGuinty finds somebody else he wants to tax or fill out an extra form for that we see these pieces of legislation.

I want to talk a little bit about Mr. Lane. Mr. Lane was a stakeholder who's been in the industry for over 11 years. He sent an e-mail to the minister that clearly was ignored. Mr. Lane gave Ms. Savoline the permission to read his e-mail in the Legislature, which I will in turn do for her. I hope, and it's probably hope against hope, that this Liberal government will listen to Mr. Lane, but I'm going to quote him: "The implementation of the statutory holiday provision which came into effect in January 2009 and promptly added approximately 6% to the cost of every temp agency in the province of Ontario"—that's a 6% tax hike.

We recently saw the \$11,000 tax hike on WSIB for small contractors. That sure as heck hurt the folks in Nepean-Carleton. This is going to hurt the folks in Nepean-Carleton. Their massive increase in the minimum wage in a very short period of time is going to hurt the folks in Nepean-Carleton. Their HST, I already know, is going to hurt the people in Nepean-Carleton. And the tax and power grab—30% to 50% more in power and energy rates. I don't know how much more they think they can soak the people of Ontario and the people of Nepean-Carleton, but this Liberal government has found yet another way, with a new 6% tax hike on every temporary agency in the province of Ontario. Perhaps now the chief government whip would like me to stop talking about the bill instead of staying on message as we run through a litany of tax hikes brought on this year by this Liberal government. This is just one more example.

1750

According to ACSESS, another temporary agency, most agencies that did post earnings earned less than 5% before taxes, which basically means you've already put almost every agency into a loss position from the provisions already implemented. By moving forward with the requirement to meet standards for termination and notice provisions of Bill 139, you will effectively destroy the entire temporary help industry in Ontario.

It's a sad, sad state of affairs. Who will benefit when temporary agencies cease to exist, somewhat like our

manufacturing sector in some communities? Where are the jobs? If Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Fonseca and the other job-killing creators of legislation in the Liberal Party have their way, there won't be any jobs at all for these temporary agencies to fill. I am very disappointed in this legislation. I think we can all do better in business practices. But at a time when small and medium-sized businesses are suffering, regardless of what they are, why bother bringing in more job-killing legislation like Bill 139?

On that note, I've asked my question; I've made my case. I will oppose this bill, and I want to congratulate the people like Isabelle Copeland, Mr. Lane and so many others who I know not only sent members of the official opposition correspondence on this contentious piece of legislation, but also sent it to you—and shame on you for not listening to them. Shame on you for not listening to them on imposing the GST, and shame on you for not listening to them in their opposition of Bill 150, because what's going to happen, of course—we all know this. It's happened too many times since this second mandate, and at some point the people will not forget. The people will not forget the constant taxing, the constant regulations. They will not forget the constant burdens placed on them by this Liberal government, whether it's at their work or at their home or even at the hockey rink, where they're going to start raising taxes on ice times at our local rinks.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you very much for the opportunity, my colleague Bob Bailey from Sarnia for doing one great job on this piece of legislation, and Joyce Savoline, the MPP for Burlington, who allowed me to fill her slot with some of her words. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's sad but not unexpected. The member from Nepean–Carleton gets and up talks about Bill 139, which is about giving some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario a little bit of protection, so that they will be paid a decent minimum wage, so they won't be made to work in unsafe conditions, so they'll be treated in a humane way, so they won't be abused by some employers, yet she in her dissertation never for once mentioned these vulnerable workers—not one word about these young mothers, these young newcomers, these people who are working for these temporary agencies who have come to governments for many years asking for a little bit of protection. They want to work, but they don't want to be forced to work in unsafe conditions, working 14 hours a day and then not being paid.

That's what this bill tries to address, and the member from Nepean–Carleton wouldn't even mention them in this legislation. All she talked about is the Mike Harris legacy of destroying this province, and yet she doesn't even care about these people who came to committee, who have written letters. Many of them cannot speak English that well, yet they came because conditions were so deplorable as a result of some of these temporary agencies.

We have a duty to protect those who can't protect themselves, and that's what this bill tries to do. The temporary agencies and the people who own them also have rights, but I think they have a stronger voice in the member from Nepean–Carleton than the poor, under-serviced temp help workers do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech from the member from Nepean–Carleton to do with Bill 139, the temp help agencies bill. It was interesting to hear the member from Nepean–Carleton talk from personal experience about when she had a positive experience at a temp help agency working in Ottawa, and from her temporary work ended up getting permanent work. We certainly heard from a lot of people who came to the committee that that was their experience as well, that it was a way to build skills, to develop skills, to find employment, to have flexible employment. We heard from a lot of people who appreciate the flexibility that they have, and we certainly know from a business perspective that that flexibility is very much needed, particularly where the economy is in a state of flux, where things are uncertain, where factories don't know how many orders they're going to have and they need to bring more people in. It helps our economy, but it also provides opportunity for people.

It's interesting that we heard from the critic, Bob Bailey, the member from Sarnia–Lambton, about his positive experience where he actually used a temporary help agency to help staff his constituency, and also got a full-time employee out of it. So I say to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—I would like to quote Gary French, the past president of ACSESS, where he says, in an e-mail to me, “The brush is being liberally (no pun intended) applied to the detriment of Ontario business and workers in these proposals to which ACSESS objects. Other parts of the legislation are supported and maintain a level playing field.”

I think that's good representation. You're taking a broad brush and affecting all those good operators out there, the 99% of them, to deal with the 1% of bad operators.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think that when we discuss this bill we have to keep coming back to what it's there to do. What it's there to do is to set out a clear, defined, level playing field for both the firms whose business it is to find clients who need temporary help, to find people who like to do temporary work—and match the two. What the bill set out to do—successfully, if one heard the many deputations in the hearings overwhelmingly in favour of what the bill was trying to do—what the bill does is to make clear what the expectations are of those agencies that recruit temporary help and match that temporary help with opportunities among the firm's clients.

I want to come back to a couple of points. When it comes to making the transition from working temporarily

for a firm to being employed full-time by a firm, the bill prevents the agencies from doing what amounts to double-dipping. It can't take a candidate and say, "We'd like to charge you a bunch of money for writing your resumé and doing some job training" and whatnot, with the implication being that if you don't take this money and you don't take this training and you don't buy this service, maybe the agency won't find you a job. The bill says, "We're going to make the playing field level. You're not allowed to charge this money, which, by the way, you don't need to charge anyway."

The bill also says that if you've been placed with a client company for a period longer than six months—and six months is plenty of time for everybody—if the company says, "Look, we like you. We'd like to have you on staff," there is no penalty payment to the agency. The agency cannot charge a temp-to-permanent fee. That's a progressive step. Those are just two small items that make Bill 139 a piece of law whose time has come.

1800

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments? I'll return to the member for Nepean–Carleton then, who has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Eglinton–Lawrence and Mississauga–Streetsville, and of course my good friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I don't know what to say in response to the comments made by the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I thought from his criticism of me—that I didn't speak from experience or from the knowledge of temporary agencies—that he must not have been listening. I'm not sure if he has any direct experience himself of having worked for a reputable firm who gave you a hand up. I'm not sure if he ever did, but I certainly did, and I'm certainly grateful for that experience. I think it's made me a better person who understands the value of a hard-earned dollar, because not all of us live in downtown Toronto and have the world at our feet.

In fact, some of us struggle to create a better life for ourselves and our family. And thankfully Ontario, under Mike Harris—as much as they want to heckle and jeer—made that possible, because he created an environment which we should never forget was the fastest-growing economy in the country. It made the economic engine of this country strong, robust and viable.

When they took the keys to Queen's Park and the Premier's office, all we saw was a business-killing, job-killing environment which put more people on the rolls of social assistance when we had worked so hard to get them off. All this bill will do is be another slap in the face to those people who are out there trying to create the opportunities that I had and probably others here have had as well.

So again, I am adamantly opposed to this bill, adamantly opposed to the way they've been carrying on and conducting themselves since they were re-elected, and of course since they were elected in the first place,

and I look forward to 2011, when the voters remember all of the things that they have done.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or his parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I recognize the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to have this opportunity under standing order 38(a) to offer why I'm dissatisfied with the response I received from the Minister of Consumer Services today during question period, which dealt with his refusal to meet with TICO task force members just weeks before the collapse of Conquest Vacations. This minister has failed to address the systemic shortcomings of TICO, which date back to the demise of One Step Travel in 2006. Why is this important and how does this concern Conquest Vacations?

The minister wishes that the failures under TICO in the Liberals' first term in office would stay in the past, but I think that the leader of his party, Premier Dalton McGuinty, had one thing right when he once said, "The best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour." So if TICO erred once, it was likely that they'd do it again. And that they did. One Step, which in seven of its 10 years lacked sufficient working capital, with three of those years working with negative capital, was tried and convicted in an Ontario Court of Justice. The justice ruled, less than one year ago on June 23: "... should TICO have sanctioned Mr. Anavari (of One Step) much earlier that perhaps the offences would not have resulted." That's astounding. The judge at the time admonished TICO for its role, or more aptly, for its lack of a role in preventing the single-largest payout in Ontario's history from TICO's compensation fund, which was \$1.1 million. Now we'll be on the hook, or more aptly, the retailers will be on the hook in their compensation fund, which is limited at \$5,000 per person and \$5 million in total after the Conquest compensation.

Ever since, the TICO task force and members of the Association of Retail Travel Agents have been calling on TICO and the Minister of Consumer Services to meet with them and call an inquiry into what happened at One Step to prevent the situation from ever happening again. Then, just weeks after making their most recent request, the Minister of Consumer Services says he was too busy

to meet. Conquest collapses, leaving Ontarians stranded in several out-of-country destinations.

While not all the circumstances in Conquest's instance are the same as One Step's, one very important variable does connect the two cases: lack of sufficient working capital and TICO's knowledge of this. While Conquest was going under, the president of TICO, Michael Pepper, knew they lacked sufficient working capital and acknowledged that on April 18 in the *Toronto Star* when he said, "I'm not going suspend anyone when they're off-side of working capital, but if they can't address it, that's when I'm going take some action."

Perhaps had the inquiry been called, a key recommendation would have been made to take more precautions when a vacation company can't address working capital. Unfortunately, we will never know that. The minister has continually refused to call an inquiry or to even meet with those who have ideas on how to better protect our vacationers. Instead, the minister has been glib and insulting in his answers over the past two days, and the vacationers and retail travel agents in this province deserve much better from him.

I've asked serious questions, all outlining a systemic breach in TICO's monitoring and disclosure practices, all outlining the minister's failure to hold TICO to account for its shoddy work, which has put Ontarians at risk in other countries when they were left stranded. Instead of providing answers, the minister resorted to ill-advised and often wrong assertions on TICO, the Conquest Vacations collapse and One Step's situation. One Step, had it been investigated by the minister properly, could have averted the collapse at Conquest and significantly reduced the utter catastrophe faced by so many Ontario travellers.

Now let me share with you an e-mail from Bruce Bishins, president of the Association of Retail Travel Agents of Ontario:

"Takhar seems to continue to blur the issue that TICO agreed and put forth the independent audit at the June 2008 TICO AGM. This is false.

"TICO staff and officials did everything they could to prevent members from pursuing a public inquiry. Even after the members prevailed in getting the motion approved....

"TICO's announcement of an audit first came on February 25, 2009, and only after public revelations that the court took TICO to task....

"The issue which Takhar continues to make that One Step was 'ancient history' is also a red herring because the facts regarding TICO's incompetence and the release of the trial transcripts first came in the fall of 2008.

"Also, his continuing drone on bringing people home is all fine and well"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, the member for Hamilton Mountain, has now five minutes to reply.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to thank the honourable member from Nepean-Carleton for her question.

First, I'd like to begin by making one thing very, very clear: One Step Travel and Conquest are two separate situations. In the case of One Step Travel, which closed in 2006, TICO investigated its conduct and, in 2008, charges were laid under the Travel Industry Act. One Step Travel and its principal were convicted of financial misconduct relating to its trust accounts. In addition to these convictions, the principal of One Step Travel was sentenced to 18 months in jail.

In 2007, the executive committee of the TICO board of directors reviewed TICO's handling of One Step Travel and determined that TICO handled the matter appropriately. Acting on a complaint, the executive committee conducted a second review of TICO's handling of this closure, and the committee again, for the second time, found that the matter had been handled appropriately.

At TICO's 2008 annual general meeting, some member raised concerns regarding TICO's handling of One Step's closure. The TICO board directors then decided to commission a third party review of how TICO handled the specific closure of One Step Travel. This independent review is currently in progress and is being conducted by the Ontario internal audit division of the Ministry of Finance. The review is independent of both the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services and TICO. I know the minister looks forward to seeing the results of this review.

In the case of Conquest, in light of the closure, we are doing an assessment which is currently in progress. Our first priority is to protect consumers. Any time something like this happens, it's a struggle for the people who get caught in the middle. It's important to always take stock and see what lessons can be learned and applied in the future. The assessment in light of the Conquest Vacations closure is currently in progress, and I know that the minister looks forward to receiving the findings.

It is also important to know whether TICO has adequate tools to carry out its responsibilities. This is about continuous improvement and learning. The assessment will examine if these responsibilities provide the necessary level of consumer protection. Once this work is completed, any necessary changes will be implemented.

TICO is a self-managed, not-for-profit corporation that was created in 1997, and they are responsible for their day-to-day operations. TICO is governed by a 15-member board of directors which includes 11 members from the industry. As both the Premier and the minister said last week, we need to take a look at TICO and make sure it has the necessary authority to intervene in situations at the appropriate time and see what lessons might be learned.

However, it's important to remember that we are one of only three provinces that have a compensation fund for travellers. Consumers who purchase travel services in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland, PEI, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are not protected like Ontarians are.

In closing, consumers who purchase travel services through a registered Ontario travel agent should feel protected. Ontario travel agents are covered should something unfortunate happen that causes their travel plans to be disrupted or cancelled.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1812.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
N'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

BAPS Women's Conference

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....6339

School safety

Mrs. Joyce Savoline6339

Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre

Mr. Phil McNeely6340

Violent crime

Mr. Garfield Dunlop6340

Carnation Revolution

Mr. Charles Sousa6340

Noble Villeneuve

Mr. Jim Brownell6341

Transit vehicle contract

Mr. Bill Mauro6341

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

M. Shafiq Qadri.....6341

Report adopted.....6341

Standing Committee on Estimates

Mr. Garfield Dunlop6341

Report deemed received.....6342

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Peter Fonseca6342

Mr. Robert Bailey6342

Mr. Peter Kormos.....6343

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....6343

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Cemeteries

Mr. Jeff Leal.....6343

Taxation

Mr. Bill Murdoch6344

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue6344

Child custody

Mr. Jim Brownell6344

Hospital funding

Mr. Norm Miller6344

Community safety

Mr. Yasir Naqvi6345

Motorcycle safety

Mr. Bill Murdoch6345

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....6345

Taxation

Mr. Jim Wilson.....6345

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell6346

Child protection

Mr. Bill Murdoch6346

Hospital funding

Mr. Bob Delaney6346

Sales tax

Mr. Norm Miller.....6346

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell6346

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2009, Bill 139, Mr. Fonseca / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (agences de placement temporaire), projet de loi 139, M. Fonseca

M. Gilles Bisson.....6347

Mr. Khalil Ramal6350

Mr. Robert Bailey.....6350

Mr. Michael Prue6351

Mr. Vic Dhillon.....6351

Mr. Gilles Bisson6351

Mr. Khalil Ramal6352

Mr. Norm Miller.....6353

Mr. Michael Prue6354

Mr. Gilles Bisson6354

Mr. Vic Dhillon.....6354

Mr. Khalil Ramal6354

Mr. Robert Bailey.....6355

Mr. Michael Prue6358

Mr. Toby Barrett6359

Mr. Gilles Bisson6359

Mr. Vic Dhillon.....6359

Mr. Robert Bailey.....6359

Mr. Michael Prue6360

Mr. Bob Delaney6363

Ms. Lisa MacLeod6363

Mr. Gilles Bisson6363

Mr. Norm Miller.....6364

Mr. Michael Prue6364

Ms. Lisa MacLeod6364

Mr. Mike Colle.....6366

Mr. Norm Miller.....6366

Mr. Bob Delaney6366

Ms. Lisa MacLeod6367

Third reading debate deemed adjourned6367

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

Travel industry

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	6367
Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis	6368

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 28 April 2009 / Mardi 28 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Toxics Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 167, Mr. Gerretsen / Loi de 2009 sur la réduction des toxiques, projet de loi 167, M. Gerretsen

Mr. Peter Tabuns	6319
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6326
Mr. Toby Barrett	6327
Mr. Khalil Ramal	6327
Mr. John O'Toole	6327
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6328
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6328

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Monique M. Smith	6328
Hon. Michael Chan	6328
Mr. Jim Brownell	6328
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6328
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6328
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6328

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Infectious disease control

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	6328
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	6329

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	6329
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	6329

Automotive industry

Mr. Peter Kormos	6330
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	6330

Medical evacuation

Mr. Peter Tabuns	6331
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	6331
Hon. David Caplan	6331

Green power generation

Mr. John Yakabuski	6332
Hon. George Smitherman	6332

Attawapiskat First Nation

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6332
Hon. Brad Duguid	6332

Infectious disease control

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6333
Hon. David Caplan	6333

Automotive industry

Mr. Toby Barrett	6333
Hon. Michael Bryant	6334
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6334

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue	6334
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6334

Driver licences

Mr. Bruce Crozier	6334
Hon. James J. Bradley	6335

Travel industry

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6335
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	6335

Grape and wine industry

Mr. Peter Kormos	6336
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6336

Aboriginal housing

Mr. Bill Mauro	6336
Hon. Jim Watson	6336

School closures

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6337
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6337
Mr. Jim Wilson	6337

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Howard Hampton	6337
Hon. Michael Bryant	6338

Agri-food industry

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis	6338
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6338

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6338
---------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6338
---------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Rainwater collection

Mr. Toby Barrett	6339
------------------------	------

Local health integration networks

Mr. Peter Kormos	6339
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N
X1
-D23

Government
Publications



No. 142

N° 142

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 29 April 2009

Mercredi 29 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOXICS REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION
DES TOXIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 28, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts / *Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à promouvoir une réduction de l'utilisation et de la création de substances toxiques et à modifier d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It is indeed a good morning; the weather is beautiful. I'm pleased to stand in my place this morning to speak in support of Bill 167 for many different reasons. This bill, the Ontario toxics reduction strategy, is an important bill for the province of Ontario.

As you know, many people these days are concerned about their health. In North America, and especially in Canada, the Industrial Revolution created many different jobs and many different factories and companies in many different spots and locations in the province of Ontario. As a result of this revolution, those companies started using different chemicals to produce many different products for the people of Ontario. For some reason, those products contained some toxic elements, and as a result of this Industrial Revolution, we created a lot of toxic waste, whether we knew that or not. But the most important thing is that those toxic wastes have never been dealt with in the province of Ontario.

I want to tell you something about my riding of London-Fanshawe. My riding is home to many different factories and companies, opened after the Second World War, like Westinghouse, GM, 3M and many other prominent companies. Those companies dealt with toxic waste and chemicals, and back then in the 1970s and 1960s nobody knew that those chemicals would harm people. I'll give you an example. Right now Westinghouse has the biggest warehouse for PCB toxic waste in the whole

province of Ontario. So back then, many workers, many employees, used to work in that factory, work in this company, and they told me they used to wash their hands in those PCBs because they thought it was a good substance to clean their hands. But they never knew those substances were toxic and not good for their health. Many years later, as more research was done in Ontario and worldwide, they determined that those substances were very toxic for human beings. Therefore they are banned from being used in many different companies and different factories across the province, maybe across North America. Back then, the government of the day collected all the toxic waste at the site on Clarke Road and Huron Street in London, which has the biggest containers and the most toxic waste in the whole province of Ontario.

Our government, in the last budget—not this budget, but the budget before—determined that we have to clean up those sites. We invested more than \$64 million, hired many different companies and specialists and experts in that field to clean it in a fashion to protect the population. I want to thank the minister and his staff for taking the lead in this matter.

So this is one component of the toxic waste stored in the province of Ontario. I learned while I was reading this bill that we have the most toxic waste in the whole country, as a matter of fact in the whole of North America. It's a bad image for Ontarians, especially at this time, when technology has improved a lot, when science and research and innovation have improved a lot. That's why this bill came: in order to reduce the toxic waste in this province and make it the cleanest province ever in the whole globe.

How can we do this? As you know, a couple of years ago our Premier stood in his place and said, "We want to introduce a bill to clean up toxic waste in this province. We want to introduce a progressive bill to be able to deal with this issue in a professional manner, without affecting the companies and in a way that we can protect the people of Ontario." That's why this bill is being introduced now. It has been in debate for many days and many hours; many people spoke on this bill. I heard my colleagues, the opposition party and the third party speak in different ways with different input on this bill. This is a very important bill. After I read all the elements and listened to many people, I think it's important to support it and important to go forward in order to start cleaning up our province to make it the cleanest one in North America.

We invested more than \$41 million to support companies, factories and industries that want to change their

ways, go to a greener way in order to reduce toxic waste. Also, this bill requires all companies to notify people about the toxic waste in their products, and to list it, in order to prevent any problems from happening. Also, it's important to notify the public about the content, the substances in the products they use on a daily basis, because some people have allergies; they can't accept certain toxic waste substances. Also, it's important to notify Ontarians about the warehouses where we house toxic waste in Ontario because we, the citizens of this province, have a right to know exactly where toxic waste is being stored and how we can deal with it on a regular basis.

So we put in a target. That target is a very progressive target. I listened to the member from Toronto–Danforth speaking yesterday morning on this bill, and he said it's not a progressive bill and that this bill doesn't fulfill our commitment toward toxic waste. But he forgot that this bill is very progressive. There's financial support tied to this bill to support factories, companies, to implement their strategies. There is a money component to many different factories and companies if they want to switch their ways from using toxic chemicals or components or substances in their products to greener, safe and environmentally good products.

As you know, our Minister of the Environment has introduced so many different steps over the last two years to reduce toxic waste in Ontario, starting from banning cosmetic pesticides on the lawns in Ontario, unifying the whole system in this province. Also, dealing with tires: As you know, tires have a substance, some kinds of chemicals. All these elements should be dealt with, and that's what we've done in Ontario.

0910

It's also important to note at this time that it's our obligation and duty as a government to protect the people of Ontario. It is our duty and obligation to notify people who want to live in certain spots about the toxic chemicals being stored in those locations. So we set a target to deal with more than 45 substances—this is our priority in this first phase—and also to deal with almost 2,000 companies across the province of Ontario that have 10 people or more to fill out applications and notify the government about how they deal with their chemical waste and what to do with it. Also, an element of this bill forces the company to notify people about the toxic elements and substances in their products. These steps would be implemented by the first and second phases, starting in 2009, if this bill passes, and would be finished by 2014. We are going to deal with 2,000 companies, and the first phase will be almost 1,200 companies across Ontario.

Many people, many stakeholders, came and commended the government on this approach. Many stakeholders in Ontario, from the Cancer Society to the doctors, the physicians, and many activists in this regard came, gave their proposals and raised their concerns about this bill. I know some companies—and the member from the opposition party spoke about this element—thought that if we introduce this bill, we'll be creating some kinds of barriers, we'll be creating obstacles for many different

companies to compete nationally and internationally. But in the end, our health and our future are determined by how we can clean up this province and make sure that people live healthy in the province.

I heard the member from Toronto–Danforth speaking yesterday about the side effects of chemicals being stored near subdivisions, where people were exposed to those chemicals, and how it can affect births, their health and their attitude. So it's very important for all of us to make sure that our environment is safe.

It's important to note, too, that of the people in Ontario, almost 90% support the reduction of toxic waste. It's actually more popular than pollution in the water and talking about and dealing with climate change. This is a very important, fundamental base to start with. When you build your house, when you want go to a park, when you want to go to the sea, to a lake or to a river, you want to know for sure that those areas which are supposed to be public places, supposed to be attracting people—kids, young adults and seniors—to enjoy their day are free of chemicals and free of toxic waste.

This is what happened in my riding, London–Fanshawe. Pottersburg Creek was a place to release all the toxic chemicals for many years. That's why people complained about this, and that's why the government, back then, collected and cleaned up the creek in order to make it clean for people to enjoy again, because this creek starts in the north end of my riding and runs all the way to the south end, and goes through a lot of parks and a lot of subdivisions. Many kids used to play in those creeks and many people built their homes and built parks around the creeks, because it was a good environment, a good location and a good place. That's why we want to make sure those places are clean and free from any toxic chemicals, products and substances, to make sure all the people who want to enjoy their days out can feel free, play and enjoy without concerns about their health or any problem they might face in the future. So I think it's important to start work on this bill. I'm looking forward to seeing all the members from both sides of the House supporting this bill.

I know we heard the member from Toronto–Danforth also say that this bill can create some duplications, because so many different bylaws in the province of Ontario are already implemented, have already been passed and are already being used, so why do we want to introduce this bill? Also, the opposition party said the federal government has some kind of jurisdiction. They've already passed law. They already have a guideline. Why do we want to interfere between the bylaws of the municipalities and also the federal laws?

I want to say we're not going to go duplicating the laws in the province of Ontario. We're not going to step on the jurisdictions of the municipalities or the federal government. We want to work together to create a safe environment. I think it's important for all of us, as a government in this province, to continue to work with municipalities, to continue working with the federal government to create a safe and clean environment to protect

our future and to make sure our population lives in a safe place.

Thank you for allowing me to speak. I'm looking forward to seeing all the members of this House supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's important to listen to the member from London-Fanshawe. He represents his riding and, I guess, the views of this bill. We've said consistently on this side that what the government has to do here first of all is to try to be consistent instead of just saying things that sound good and look good. Most of the things you hear are what the public is thinking. It's been road-tested. They probably polled it to see that this toxic waste strategy sounds good. But when you look deep below it, it really is a non-compliance piece of legislation. I'm suspicious at some of the wording with respect to the recourse of how enforcement officers can, without warrant, get on to property.

When I say "consistency," they've got to look at what is happening in other jurisdictions and specifically in Canadian jurisdictions. There should be a federal standard for toxic materials that could be imported or exported inter-provincially, either in vehicles moving from jurisdictions—so it's important to have a national standard. In fact the federal government, I think under Minister Tony Clement and previously under John Baird, spoke about it before. The Minister of Health and Minister of the Environment at the time were leading the way in Canada and maybe even in North America to come up with a solution and a strategy on toxic waste management.

Ontario—it's sort of like the Pesticides Act. Cosmetic pesticide now is having some problems because it's inconsistent with federal standards. I'm surprised, sometimes, when I hear the government saying all the things that sound good on the front page of the *Toronto Star*, but when you drill down or turn to page 9 or 10, into the detail, there's really nothing there.

I'm not at this point supportive of—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Paul Miller: I too share my colleague's concern, working in an industry which created a lot of chemical by-products. This bill falls real short of what's really needed in this country. There are literally thousands of chemicals in Lake Ontario alone of which they don't even know the effect on humans in combination with other chemicals.

I remember years ago, when I was fighting a landfill in the city of Stoney Creek, there were a lot of toxins in there. They even accepted toxins from Michigan which the state of Michigan wouldn't even accept. They had lots of piles and piles of stuff that they couldn't get at because they were put in there and there were investigations.

First of all, what's needed: They don't have enough inspectors; they don't inspect the sites. There are chemicals they don't even know what the effects of are. We

need a federal and provincial body to oversee chemicals and the reactions on humans in this province.

This bill is just what I like to call another public publicity fluff bill. We've already got WHMIS. We've already got health inspectors. We've already got scientists and chemical engineers looking at these things. I don't see any of that in here. This is simply another thing to please the public, with no substance. Frankly, this bill is really below par, to say the least.

0920

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I always enjoy the comments of my colleague from London-Fanshawe, representing London, which is noted as the city of trees. I think it's appropriate that a member from London would talk about Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act.

The member from London-Fanshawe is truly the Ontario Canadian success story. The family came from Lebanon many years ago and settled in London, Ontario. I know the member from London-Fanshawe, a successful business person, decided to take that expertise to come into public life, and it's evident when he talks about his passion for a bill to reduce toxins and their use in the province of Ontario.

Just last Saturday I had the opportunity to attend the Green Expo in Peterborough. Wendy Mesley was the guest speaker—we all know her from CBC news. One of the things that was interesting about that is that there were a lot of people at this trade show who were providing products one can use in everyday living to reduce the toxins from many products we normally would pick off the shelf and use in our homes on a day-to-day basis, or in manufacturing or other business settings. I just want to compliment Swish Chemical, headquartered in Peterborough. The Ambler family started many years ago in a basement in downtown Peterborough and now is one of the leading manufacturers of non-toxic cleaning products throughout Ontario; indeed, they have operations in the United States.

When you look at this bill, the government of Ontario will be providing some \$24 million to help Ontario's industries comply with the new rules, transform their processes, find green chemistry alternatives and reduce the use of toxins in their operations. What an economic opportunity to transform some of these existing manufacturers in Ontario, move them into the new green era and provide new job opportunities for people in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: To follow up on the presentation by the member from London-Fanshawe, we do support industry publishing these plans; we support industry putting together these plans in the first place to report on what substances they are using. This is not voluntary; this is a mandatory requirement. This was the model that was put forward 20 years ago by the Massachusetts legislation, which we put forward five months before you guys did.

What we are concerned about is that we do know that the publishing of these plans and creating the plans is part of the program, but there is no mention of assistance to industry—manufacturing, forestry, mining—and particularly small business to implement some of the remedial measures that would obviously be identified in these plans; no mention of tax breaks, interest-free loans, grants or things like this. We know that the implementation of these plans is voluntary—this is what we're told by the minister—but there's no incentive for industry to go forward on that.

The other thing we question: This legislation has gotten out of date rapidly, not only because of the changing economy, but also because of the tremendous work the federal has been doing in pulling together their lists identifying the high-priority, high-risk toxics that are the real danger. Sure, we can deal with all 23,000 identified substances within our industrial processes, but at some point we have to focus on the dangerous ones.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for London—Fanshawe, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I thank all the members who spoke for or against my comments. I want to tell the member from Durham that I agree with him: The federal government should come to the table. We have the Port Stanley site, and many people complain about it. We submitted a lot of applications operated by the federal government, and the federal government so far didn't respond. This place would affect our water supply in the whole region.

Also, to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, we've started; we're not just waiting till this bill is fully passed in order to start to clean up the province of Ontario. I want to thank the Minister of the Environment for investing more than \$64 million in my riding, London—Fanshawe, to decommission and clean up the Westinghouse site of PCBs. I think we are investing money and trying our best to clean up, and not just waiting for this bill to pass.

I want to thank the member from Peterborough for his comments and also for his commitment to a cleaner Ontario and to cleaning this beautiful province to make it fit for all people, especially future generations.

To the member for Haldimand—Norfolk: I agree with you. There has been continuous effort by many different governments in the past. We're not saying we are the best; we're not saying we are the only government of this province to embark on this project. But we said loudly and clearly that it's our obligation and duty. Because this province has the highest levels of toxic waste in Canada and North America, it is our obligation and duty to start doing something to clean it up; to create some standards and targets; to notify the companies, factories and industries that want to operate in this province that they must comply with our conditions, label all their products, clean up their act and deal with it in a professional manner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to share my constituents' concerns and opinions regarding Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act, 2009.

Our caucus is aware, and very supportive, of the need for a concerted effort that will reduce the impact of toxins on our citizens and also on our environment. We look forward to working, through this proposed legislation, toward an effective plan that will see the government and business work together to reduce toxins in our province.

It is important that we are mindful and diligent, wherever possible, to replace and eliminate the use of toxic substances and their related health and environmental hazards.

As in the case of the pesticide ban, we are seeing government decisions, legislation and regulations based on emotions and concern, as opposed to fact and science.

This legislation creates unnecessary duplication. The federal government has already developed what many consider to be a world-class chemical management plan or CMP. The CMP is governed by the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the CEPA, and has a well-known approach to deciding which chemicals need to be assessed and a rapid and aggressive timetable for doing those assessments and developing regulations as required.

Adhering to the federal CMP would ensure that the identification of toxics for potential reduction is based on sound science and risk-based process, while avoiding regulatory duplication and minimizing additional costs—money we don't have anyway.

In the process of following this provincial direction, we are duplicating work, and we're duplicating costs that would be more effectively utilized in other areas to deliver our toxic reduction goals.

Bill 167 should not be about growing the bureaucracy or creating additional unnecessary regulatory burdens on business. If this is just another form that leads to nowhere, Minister, let me tell you, our businesses are full up.

This bill fails to define what "toxic" means. Instead, it leaves that definition up to regulation. The public doesn't even know what you're talking about when you say "toxic."

The devil is always in the details. When the meat of the bill is determined in the regulatory phase, the resulting legislation becomes undemocratic. It's undemocratic because the substance of the bill will not be passed through the debate process, in front of the public, in the Legislature; and the government has a blank paper from which to draft rules and regulations that nobody has a chance to comment on or influence or change.

Finally, there is some debate today about the success of the Massachusetts TURA. Some attribute reduction in toxin use to businesses actually leaving the state as a direct result of the extra regulatory burden associated with that act.

We should also be mindful of the impact that the proposed inclusion of mining under this legislation will have on the mining sector as a whole.

While the results of the Massachusetts legislation model, upon which this bill is based, are well-known and

tangible, the impact on mining is largely unknown, given the lack of mining opportunity in Massachusetts.

0930

The McGuinty toxics legislation borrows heavily from our April 27 PC pre-election announcement, and it was called the "Made-in-Ontario plan to reduce toxins." We believe in a toxics reduction plan that uses both carrots and sticks to reduce and eliminate contaminants by:

- working in harmony with the federal government to utilize the federal list of toxic substances—the work has been done, Minister;

- requiring Ontario businesses that use a restricted chemical on the federal list to disclose the use of that chemical to the public;

- requiring businesses to prepare a plan evaluating all of their options for reducing or eliminating the use of these toxins;

- providing incentives for those to adopt their plans and reduce the use of these chemicals by establishing a toxin reduction fund, and through measures such as targeted tax measures;

- sharing best practices to help small businesses learn from others; and

- finally, while we agree on many of the goals of the plan, the timing of the introduction is questionable, given the current economic conditions in which business and industry find themselves.

The increased cost of doing business that this legislation will engender creates an even greater burden on reeling industry already being forced to cut their workforce or pull up stakes for more business-friendly environments like the western provinces.

I felt it was important to take this opportunity to speak to Bill 167 as a result of the Liberal government's perpetual disregard for stakeholders and the opinions of those who elected them in the first place. My constituents have given very well-thought-out positions on Bill 167. It may take some time, but I wish to read their entire correspondence into the record, as they deserve to be heard. One very concerned constituent writes:

"I am pleased the government is taking the first step towards reducing toxic chemicals in Ontario. As your constituent, I am concerned about toxic chemicals being used and released where I live, work and play. However, there are gaps that need to be filled in order to ensure the Toxics Reduction Act protects the health of Ontarians while moving towards a green economy.

"To ensure this legislation will integrate the best in health protection with a concern for a sustainable economy, a clean environment and good jobs, the following five recommendations need to be included in Bill 167," my constituent suggests to the minister.

"Reduce the release of toxic chemicals in places where people live, work and play by 50% within five years in Ontario to protect the public health. Bill 167 does not include numerical goals or targets for reducing toxic chemicals in Ontario.

"Replace toxic chemicals where safer alternatives exist. Bill 167 should make substitution a requirement where safer alternatives exist." It's silent on these things.

"Restrict the use of toxic chemicals that are still in use through guidance from the Ontario Toxic Use Reduction Institute," an institute that "was an important component to the success of Massachusetts's TUR legislation and is currently not part of the proposed legislation.

"Report annually"—this is a no-brainer—"on progress and monitor emissions, holding industry accountable to reduce their use of toxic substances through the development and enforcement of new regulations; setting targets and the development of an institute will help hold industry accountable by the government and" also by "the public." Let's not forget: We're doing this for the public.

"Reveal to all Ontarians the toxic chemicals in their workplace, communities and homes through an identifiable product label or symbol and access to a public database;

"Bill 167 should include a component for product labelling.

"I believe there should be a strong focus on community right to know because with more information about the toxic substances we are being exposed to, Ontarians can make better decisions about their health and the health of their families.

"The above recommendations are also supported by the Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Ontario Public Health Association, United Steelworkers, Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Ontario College of Family Physicians, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Ontario Lung Association, Prevent Cancer Now and Women's Healthy Environments Network." These are substantial organizations.

"How can you help ensure this legislation protects Ontarians?" says my constituent. "Also, as there are multiple amendments that need to be made to Bill 167 we recommend the Toxics Reduction Act be referred to a standing committee for further debate."

I hope the minister is listening carefully. The citizens of the province of Ontario are well up on this issue, and they are demanding the right to participate in a democratic process and share their recommendations and concerns with our Legislature on Bill 167. The meat of this bill is yet again in regulation, where it can be easily changed outside the scrutiny of this Legislature and outside the scrutiny of the public.

Again we see this government giving public and private citizens the powers of police. This bill not only provides for more provincial officers, but it gives them the authority to enter a premises without a warrant, the right to use force and the powers of police. What are we doing? Is this not the third time an act is proposing something like this just in the short time this Legislature has been sitting? This Liberal government is taking liberties with our liberties, and it is unacceptable. My caucus colleagues and I will not sit quietly as this Liberal government continues to infringe on private rights.

I look forward to the opportunity to refer my constituents to the Clerk's office in order that they can have their democratic right and be able to speak to Bill 167.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate on Bill 167. I did want to make comments on the member from Burlington. I've got to say—I probably shouldn't say it, but I just have to say it—when I hear comments like “Working in harmony with the federal government,” I think about some of the things that we have done with the federal government and how much we are working hand in hand, understanding the economy, with stimulus and the harmonization of taxation—and I might add that that side of the House is repeatedly opposed to everything that is coming from the federal government as well as from our government. I did have to enter that into the record.

But more specifically, we understand that there has to be public input into it, and our track record speaks to that. Unlike the members from across the way, who did not support the committee system and going out and hearing from the people, that's something that this side of the House strongly supports. We have repeatedly gone out and brought our proposed legislation under public scrutiny time and time again and have made adjustments, and certainly the people can look to amendments that are made. By listening to the people, it's a stronger piece of legislation.

But let's talk about specifically the toxic reduction and what that means for our business community. The business community understands about mitigating risks and what they can do within their own business plans, and how going forward is so important. They know that by doing that we talk about reduction in insurance costs; we talk about reduction in man-hours dedicated to that.

Mr. Speaker, I will have another opportunity to speak to this, and I thank you.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciated the presentation by the member from Burlington. She commenced her presentation talking about the importance, the necessity of having an effective plan, not only a plan from this government—and we know they're asking industry to provide plans, and we agree with that. But it has to be based on sound science and it has to be risk-based.

The member from Burlington highlighted again the concerns that we have with the unnecessary duplication with the federal government, the unnecessary duplication with respect to the work that the federal government is doing, especially in more recent years, and the unnecessary duplication of the taxpayer cost with respect to what the federal government is already doing with respect to toxics. The member for Burlington reiterated how important it is to work with the federal government and work with that federal toxics list that has been developed.

I know a member opposite indicated how this McQuinty government is working in harmony with the federal government and made mention of the harmonization of sales taxes, PST and GST. I don't know whether she

talks about that very much in her home riding or whether she is doing much to publicize the 13% BST, the McQuinty combined sales and federal tax that people will be required to pay. We'll hear more about that in the next budget because, like a lot of things, it doesn't come along until the next budget.

The member from Burlington makes very clear the messages from her constituents. Many people don't understand what's being discussed here. Toxics aren't defined.

Mr. Paul Miller: I find the comments from the member from Huron—Bruce very interesting. I recall in the 1990s that I was fighting a landfill in the city of Stoney Creek. We had a citizen liaison committee that was supposed to get input from the community to the company, to the ministry. Well, isn't this interesting? The company decided they were getting too much pressure. We also found that they were bringing toxins in from Michigan. There were all kinds of violations going on and not enough inspections. We kept after the ministry; it fell on deaf ears. Then the company decided to dispose of the citizen liaison committee and appoint their own puppet committee, which they did. We protested to the ministry; it fell on deaf ears and it continues to fall on deaf ears. It's still in the legal situation being addressed about reissuing the original CLC, which I was a member of, sitting for the city of Stoney Creek.

This ministry and the past ministries do not listen to the people. There are hundreds of reports in there that have not been addressed, handled poorly. They used to get a thousand trucks a week in there, and there would be one inspector for one or two trucks a week on a thousand. There is still stuff in that landfill above a city of hundreds of thousands of people. There have been leaks, there are things going on there that—they were supposed to put in a pumping station; they were supposed to put in an on-site treatment plant. They didn't do it. It was all show, all talk, and the ministry did absolutely nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all say I understand, having sat on the other side of the House, that when you're in opposition, you always have to, to some extent, criticize and try to make better a law that's being presented. So we look forward to working with the members of the opposition to actually strengthen this law.

But there have been a number of comments made, particularly by the critic for the official opposition, which I think need to be addressed at this point in time. He made the comment yesterday that he spoke to the Massachusetts Chemistry and Technology Alliance, which is a lobby group for the chemical industry in Massachusetts which basically said that nothing had changed at all. Well, I invite him to take a look at the actual report that was issued by the toxics use reduction committee in Massachusetts. In their covering letter, which is dated May 25 of last year, to Governor Patrick of Massachusetts, in which the program and the body that has been set up under the act clearly states—and I'll just read this to you, the following:

"As a result" of the act having been passed some 20 years ago, "Massachusetts businesses now are using less toxic materials, employing more efficient production processes and conserving energy, water and other resources as never before." It goes on to say that "the program has helped the state's largest toxics users reduce use by 40%, waste by 71% and on-site releases of toxic chemicals by 91%." That has been the experience in Massachusetts. That's the kind of experience we want to bring here.

On the one hand, they're saying, "We would have passed a bill if we'd been in government." We are passing that bill right now. We are going to place our emphasis on the 45 most toxic materials and the 20 most carcinogenic materials that are around right now. Yes, they're being reported on federally, but there has been no planning requirement. That's what this act is intended to do, and Ontario will be the better for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Burlington, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to thank the members from Huron-Bruce, Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the minister himself.

Who would oppose an act creating a safer environment and encouraging chemical producers to act in a way that safeguards the public, which I think they do to a great extent today? First, I think what has to happen when you create an act about toxics is, you have to define what toxics are. What are we talking about? That isn't going to happen until after it comes out of public scrutiny and debate in this House. I don't think that's fair to the public.

Riding on the coattails of the feds isn't a bad idea either because there have been some very good ideas that have come from the feds. But what this government seems to be doing is not building on that strong foundation but duplicating what has happened in the federal government. That's going to add costs, and my concern is, it's going to add confusion for the public about who's in charge of what.

I think that what we must focus on here is the science and the actual facts, and I don't see that happening in what we have read in Bill 167. Again, to leave any of that to regulation takes it away from the democratic debate in the House, and it sure takes it away from the people who voted for us to be here. They want to have their say, Minister, and they're not going to be able to because they don't have the information to base that on. I am really concerned that we are moving away from a democratic process. I encourage the minister to make this a democratic process and let the public have their say, with all the information they need to do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I must admit that I'm a little frustrated with the comments that have been going on here. I have carried the ball for the environment for a long time with other citizens in Stoney Creek, and I'll tell you, it has fallen short many times, dealing with the ministry and the companies.

Setting that aside, I'll get into the body of my notes. I'm pleased to rise today to talk about an issue which is fundamental to the health and well-being of Ontarians. The issue of toxics and the need for a tough toxic reduction strategy cannot be emphasized strongly enough. But is it enforced? Do they follow through, or is it just talk?

Across Canada, over 23,000 chemicals and substances are used in manufacturing the products we use every single day of our lives. These toxics, when combined with other chemicals—there are hundreds in our Great Lakes and other hazardous landfills—they have no idea what impact they have on the water tables and human population—and animals, for that matter. It's remarkable, the level of cancer in our province. In products such as building materials, toys, cars, food, medicine and entertainment products, we encounter chemical compounds used in the production industry every day of our lives. Although these chemical substances proliferate, we know relatively little about them and their effect on human beings. Little data exists regarding their impact on human or environmental health. However, increasingly emerging research is starting to paint a concerning picture of the relationship between these toxins and the health outcomes of populations and the environment.

0950

A 2006 study examined human tissue samples in a number of Ontarian families. The results found 46 industrial chemicals in the bodies of these people, chemicals like heavy metals, pesticides, PCBs and Teflon-related products. We also know that cancer, asthma, infertility, learning problems and birth defects are all being increasingly linked to our exposure to toxic chemicals. In the Hamilton area, where I'm from, we had what they call cancer clusters. They showed up in industrial areas and around landfill sites—higher percentages in residential areas. That's got to tell you something.

Especially when it comes to health of our children, there is increased evidence for the need to take action. What I mean by action is not just to talk about it; it's to put inspectors in the field and remove toxins and protect the environment and the people. I can't see that happening overnight, and it sure isn't happening fast enough.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, in their 2007 submission to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly regarding the Community Right to Know Act, stated: "Large margins of safety must be built in to accommodate for the much greater vulnerability of children to toxins, as they: are exposed to more toxins per body weight, absorb ingested substances differently, have developed fewer protections against toxins, face additional risks while undergoing development, face higher exposures due to activity and behaviour and have much longer to develop disease from toxins. In the case of toxins, a precautionary approach is appropriate."

As we are debating this bill, as we are evaluating whether it will fulfill its set purpose of improving the health of Ontarians and the environment, in this high standard, it is the health of our children which should be our greatest concern.

I spent over 30 years in a steel mill. I've been exposed to every toxin known to man. We used to knock asbestos off pipes like it was confetti, not knowing the effect of asbestosis. We were exposed to light oil products and by-products. As tradesmen, we used to wash our tools in benzene, which we now know causes several cancer diseases, especially leukemia. We had WHMIS programs at that time that didn't go far enough, and rarely saw a government inspector unless we phoned in a complaint. When they did come in, in most cases they ruled on the side of the company.

I really have grave concerns about the enforcement of this bill—boy. We know that every day, the research making the connection between toxic chemicals and health outcomes just grows and grows. As we learn more about the complex interaction of lifetime exposure to chemical compounds and our biology, the interplay of genes and the environment, it is the precautionary principle that must take precedence.

Prior to this election, the Premier was quoted on Toxic Nation, an Environmental Defence website, commenting on the need for this kind of legislation: a welcome comment, but how fast have they moved, how fast are they going to move, and will they enforce it? Mr. McGuinty comments on the need for “a tough new toxic reduction law and a carcinogen reduction strategy.” He calls for a plan that puts Ontario at the forefront in North America on tackling these issues. I agree with him. Will it happen soon enough? Should it have happened 35 years ago? I think so. Did it? I don't think so. Yet today, Bill 167 does not deliver on his promise. Sadly, the bill before us today fails to live up to the recommendations of the minister's Toxic Reduction Scientific Expert Panel—the people who know—and the expert opinion of groups like the Canadian Environmental Law Association. Over the years, I've had many discussions with scientists at Mac, especially Dr. Sorger, and if the general public really knew the height of things going on in our water systems and our ground systems, it would be extremely alarming.

Current toxic situations in Ontario: In North America, Ontario is second only to Texas, one of the biggest oil-producing states in America, in the tonnes of toxic chemicals being released into the air, water and going into landfill sites. You can bury it, but it won't go away. It gets into your water tables, if the so-called liners in the landfill break. They told me when the Taro landfill was built that those liners would last for 300 years. I had specialists—a package showed up at my desk from environmentalists in New Jersey, with no return address. I brought it in front of council at the time, I brought it in front of the liaison committee, and everything they had guaranteed was about one tenth of what really would happen. Even this plastic liner they were putting in the landfill was supposed to last 300 years—not. Even animals and growth could break through this liner. The “expert” that they brought in from Calgary and the States had to admit it to them, because I confronted him at council and said, “Can these things happen? Yes or no?” He looked at the company, he looked at me, he looked at

the mayor and said—remember, this is in front of the public—“The councillor is right, it can happen.” Whoops. There go all the safeguards again.

This bill fails to live up to the expectations of environmentalists and the 90% of Ontarians who are concerned about this issue. The current toxics situation in Ontario—this is a shocking fact, and one that should underscore the need for a strong toxics reduction plan for this province—is not only that our level of emissions is high, it is also the kinds of toxins being released that are of great concern. Ontario's use of cancer-causing reproductive toxins is higher than in jurisdictions with similar emission levels. In 2004, Ontario released three million kilograms of known or suspected carcinogens into the province's air, including trichloroethylene, ethylbenzene, styrene and formaldehyde—nasty stuff, all cancer-causing. This leaves Ontario as the fourth-highest emitter of carcinogenic chemicals in North America.

When it comes to reproductive toxins, Ontario ranks even worse. We are the second-highest emitter of reproductive toxins, second only to the state of Tennessee—and believe me, they don't have a lot of protection laws in Tennessee—releasing more than four million kilograms into the air in 2004. Ontario's industries account for 36% of total Canadian discharges of reportable chemicals into the air and 50% of the discharges into our water.

Is it good that today we have an opportunity to take a step forward? We have an opportunity to protect the health of future generations, a chance to lower what is constantly rising: our cancer rate. But the question remains, will the opportunity before us today be fully realized? The reality is, as the bill is currently written, it is filled with holes and inadequacies. Bill 167 lacks the teeth necessary and fails to even define some of the most central objectives it purports to accomplish.

New Democrats strongly support government action when it comes to protecting the health of our environment and the health of Ontarians. We need a toxics reduction bill that has the strength needed to protect Ontarians. We are very concerned that this bill represents a wholly inadequate response to one of the most pressing and serious issues facing our generation and future generations. I'm sure we all want our grandkids to be safe.

I want to take some time outlining the failings of Bill 167 and contrasting the gaps to the suggestions offered by groups such as the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Registered Nurses' Association and the minister's Toxic Reduction Scientific Expert Panel. I want to provide some context about the successes of other jurisdictions with similar bills and how Ontario's version is currently falling short.

New Democrats are enormously concerned about the bare bones nature of this bill. This bill provides a skeletal framework and fails to define the central aspects of the bill, including which facilities and toxic substances are to be regulated and the time period of implementation. These aspects are left to regulation to be defined at a later date. At a later date: We've been saying that for 45 years. These are not minor details. They are not issues which

require more research. The ministry has been researching the issue for a year and has received exact and expert advice from leaders in their fields. So why has the government chosen to leave so much off the table?

Given the fact that there is so much absent in this bill, it makes it awfully hard to offer solid critique on the specific oversights and to suggest changes. The fact that the government has chosen to leave so much undefined is very concerning. The fact that the government has chosen to leave so much undefined is very concerning. The fact that they are playing politics rather than dedicating their energy to creating the toughest legislation possible is a great disappointment to Ontarians.

1000

We are looking forward from the assumption that many of the regulations will follow the content procedure is worked out in the MOE's 2008 discussion paper. We would, of course, like to be basing our analysis on the content of the bill, but this government has made that impossible. However, we have much to say when it comes to what is concretely stated in the bill as well.

Starting from the very beginning of the bill, New Democrats are concerned with its stated purpose. Bill 167 reads, "The purposes of the bill are to prevent pollution and protect human health and the environment by reducing the use and creation of toxic substances, and to inform Ontarians about toxic substances."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association, a public interest group whose purpose is to use and improve laws to protect the public health and the environment, provided the Ministry of the Environment with a model bill during the MOE's consultation period on this issue. The model bill that CELA drafted provides stark contrast to what we're seeing today.

In this model bill, a multi-pronged and significantly expanded purpose section can be found. This purpose of the bill reads:

"(1) Protect human health and the environment by reducing the use of toxic substances;

"(2) Promote the use of safer alternatives to such substances;

"(3) Recognize the public's right to know the identity and amounts of toxic substances in their community from various facilities; and

"(4) Apply the precautionary principle and principles of sustainable development to these issues."

Of these four principles, only the first one is included in Bill 167. The failures for Bill 167 start at the very beginning and unfortunately characterize what we find throughout this entire bill.

Targets: Bill 167 set no targets for toxic reductions and benchmarks regarding the success of this initiative. In the ministry-created minister's Toxic Reduction Scientific Expert Panel, the recommendation for targets is made twice. On July 23, 2008, in a memorandum to the environment minister, the expert panel states, "Ontario's pollution prevention legislation should ... include clear, viable and progressive goals (i.e. a percentage reduction in toxics use and release in the province within a speci-

fied period of time); the statute should include renewable toxics reduction targets, and a mechanism for monitoring and public reporting on achievement of these targets. The panel notes that goals are not set in the current discussion paper and program."

Ontario's failure to create a set of targets for toxics reduction contravenes the most successful of toxic reductions legislation, like that in Massachusetts. By failing to create targets, Bill 167 is also ignoring the advice of CELA which recommended a 50% reduction of releases and a 20% reduction in use within five years of the first mandated reporting period. It's not there.

Sectors affected by the bill: No particular sectors are defined in Bill 167. If we are to assume that the MOE's 2008 discussion paper will form the basis for content, this is quite concerning. The MOE's discussion paper identified two sectors to be affected by a toxin reduction bill: manufacturing and mineral processing. Wow; that's interesting. Where's the chemical business here? I don't see it. That is all. Absent are waste water treatment plants and energy generating plants, some of the highest emitters of toxic substances. There's some terrible reasoning in restricting two sectors rather than aiming a toxin reduction strategy at any—I repeat, any—facility that is endangering the health of Ontarians through the release of reportable substances. Other jurisdictions have done better and so should Ontario.

The fact of the matter is that with only two sectors likely to be included in this bill, Ontarians could continue to face many risks from hazardous substances. Bill 167 should be amended to include at minimum all sectors that report to the federal National Pollutant Release Inventory: manufacturing; mining; forestry; electrical utilities; hazardous waste treatment plants; landfills; insolvent recovery facilities; chemical wholesalers; petroleum bulk terminals; as well as the oil and gas sectors; sewage treatment plants; and incinerators. Boy, that's a long list of things that were left off. Legislating mandatory reporting when it comes to these sectors would stand a chance of making a significant and helpful impact on toxin reductions in Ontario. Again, if we are to assume that the substances to be regulated will follow the MOE's discussion paper, New Democrats have their concerns. I'm glad to see that the minister is trying to listen, but he's being distracted.

In this discussion paper there are four categories of toxins divided into four schedules. Currently, the federal National Pollutant Release Inventory requires reporting on the pollutant releases, disposals and transfers of 320 substances of concern. The first schedule contains 45 National Pollutant Release Inventory chemicals that have been identified as priority toxins. This first schedule is set to become the first phase-in of Bill 167, with requirements for materials accounting, toxin reduction planning and reporting by 2010 or 2012.

The first phase would include schedule 3. However, schedule 3 would only be subject to reporting and not include a mandate for a toxin reduction planning strategy, a big omission. Included in schedule 3 are 20 priority

non-NPRI toxins; however, the action on these so-called priority toxins is weak at best.

The second schedule contains an additional 275 substances, and this would maybe be phased in by 2014—maybe phased in by 2014—or 2016. These 270 substances make up the rest of the chemicals that must be reported by the NPRI.

I can't emphasize enough how many toxins are in our Great Lakes, and it's not just the toxins that are put in singularly, it's when they combine with other toxins and the effect that has on people. Our scientists have only just touched on it. There are thousands of combinations of chemicals where they don't even know what effect they has on humans.

Looks like I'm running down on time. All I can say is, I could go on for quite a long time.

I must say that I think the government genuinely wants to try, but I genuinely believe they're falling short. I don't believe they can enforce it. I don't think they've put down enough fines on companies that dump in our province. I think that they don't listen to the public, and I can verify that with my experiences with the CLC committee in the city of Stoney Creek. Who in their right mind would have put a landfill above a city of 500,000 people on fractured bedrock? I'm sorry, beep beep runs downhill. So why they would do that—and they have these so-called liners and so-called precautionary things. They didn't even follow through on a plant that was supposed to treat the stuff right on there before it got down to the Woodward plant, which is 45 years old and can't treat it anyways—and then dump it into the lake so we can all drink it.

I'm telling you right now: They've got a long way to go and this bill doesn't cut it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm very pleased to rise and make a few comments this morning about Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act.

Firstly, I would like to applaud the Minister of the Environment. He is bringing forward a bill that is bold and it is necessary, and I appreciate that very much.

This government is moving ahead to bring in tough new toxics reduction legislation to make sure that we are reducing toxic emissions. If I could, Mr. Speaker, just to indulge me for a second: In Hamilton we have a lot of environmentalists, and one of the events that they put on this past weekend was called the ECO Film and Arts Festival. I had the opportunity to get up and speak about the ban on pesticides, and after that we watched a brilliant film called *Silent Spring*, from Rachel Carson. I just want to congratulate both Francesca Trifone and Leisha Dawson for their great organization of that event.

I also wanted to say, in regard to my colleague from Hamilton–Stoney Creek, that we are colleagues from the same place and most of the time I agree with him, but today I don't because he said a lot of things that I don't agree with. He talks about a party that cares about the environment. If this party cares about the environment,

Mr. Speaker, I ask you a couple of questions: First, why did they vote against the Clean Water Act? Why did they cancel energy conservation programs and vote against them? Why did they vote against the cosmetic pesticides? Why did they cut the budget of the Ministry of the Environment? Why did they pledge zero emissions for toxic chemicals, but they never did it?

This is a good bill. I completely agree with it—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek because he does bring a great deal of industrial experience to it, both working for the side of safety in the workplace, as well as practical experience in an industrial setting. I think that's important—some of the points he brings up. It's important, if the government's intention is to make Ontario safer, greener and cleaner, that they should actually have some kind of leverage in the legislation now.

1010

There are a couple of provisions, as I said before, that we're suspicious of, and one is that warrantless entry provision that's in the bill. If I look at the sections of bill that deal with that—section 42, and it's going on to 44, 45. There are some sections—for instance, if you look at the section on fines, if there's non-compliance, there are significant fines in this thing. A first conviction is \$25,000 per day. Fines for what? If these are in compliance with reporting—if it is about completing the paperwork, that is inappropriate. I think it should be working with industry to bring them into the new standards. I don't see that vision. If you want to have paperwork and documents, what you should be doing is looking to the federal government and saying, "Okay, let's have one form for this kind of offence"—a violation, an investigation.

Let's have consistency in it. Let's not invent a whole bunch of new red tape and paperwork that really pollutes the environment in a totally different way.

I think that the government has a good idea, and I don't think that they're executing it very well. That is really the way I've drawn the line here. I've looked at it. I consulted this morning with a couple of industries in my riding that deal with this on an ongoing basis. They want consistency. They want standards that are enforceable and consistent, especially when you look at inter-jurisdictional issues and the trucking of this kind of waste.

It's a good idea poorly executed. That's the final mark.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all comment on the statements by the member from Hamilton East. I'm sure that he's very concerned about the environment, and he has probably lived all of the environmental degradation that has been happening over the last 35 years, particularly in a place like Hamilton, where we know they've got some very serious issues. I commend him for his attitude, as I commend the member from Hamilton Mountain, who feels just as passionate about the environ-

mental issues not only in Hamilton but throughout the province of Ontario.

What this bill is really all about—it's not about duplication. A lot of these substances are already reported on federally. We want the companies to go one step further. We don't just want them to report the different substances that they're using. We want them to develop plans so that over time they can, in a voluntary fashion, reduce the amount of toxic materials that they're using. That has been the experience, as I indicated earlier, in Massachusetts.

Now, the NDP will say, "Well, make it mandatory." The problem is, if you tell companies to implement their plans in a mandatory fashion, what is that going to do to their plans? I can tell you right now that it's going to reduce their plans significantly. We would much prefer that companies come up with the most aggressive plans of reduction and then implement them on a voluntary basis, rather than make them do it when their plans, in effect, will be a lot weaker. That has been the experience in Massachusetts.

We took the advice, by the way, of Dr. Ken Geiser, who was a member of our expert panel, who was one of the authors of the Massachusetts toxics reduction act. He makes the comment that we should have started 35 years ago.

There is no question about it: This is a significant step in the right direction to take more toxic materials out of our environment, which is to the good of everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to comment on the speech given to us by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. Recognition of the importance of this initiative is something we all agree with. I think that the problems we have are in the implementation.

The minister and others, as well as the member, have made comments with regard to the role of the federal government. I think that it's very clear that the federal government has provided us with leadership on this. My concern with this bill is that the introduction of a great deal of red tape and a great deal of duplication of the general direction taken by the federal government is going to make further complications for people within the province because of the fact that, as the member from Durham mentioned, much of this commerce that comes from this is interjurisdictional. So I think that that also has to be considered when you're looking at a bill such as this. On the question of expert advice, obviously the government, in its pesticide bill, ignored its own experts. So naturally, amongst those in opposition there's a bit of concern on the track record of the government in introducing bills such as this. It would appear to be one of those things that looks good on paper and not so good in implementation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank my colleagues for their input—the member from Hamilton Mountain, the

minister and the member from Durham. Obviously, from an ideological position, we are totally on separate ground. I appreciate the Liberal minister's comments on my 35 years in the steel industry. It did definitely open my eyes, and hopefully one of those toxins doesn't do me in the next 10 years. There is a 25-year latency period, so I'm hoping one of them doesn't get me, but it may.

They believe that they're doing the right thing and I believe it is a start, but it doesn't go far enough. We've had many years of experience, through union safety and health organizations and many other scientists and other organizations, that have made it quite clear we've got to go a lot further. This bill falls short of those targets. Yes, I agree with the minister: It is a start. It's probably one of the jurisdictions that is taking a healthy look at it—no pun intended—but I really believe that it should've had more input from opposition parties and people I know in the industry who could have brought a lot to the table. Once again, a bill is being rammed through without enough public consultation. You can go to the experts, and some of the experts may be even working for the companies they're representing, which is a little disconcerting, to say the least. I can say that in my case, in the Taro landfill, the company brought in experts who actually were working for the company. So I'm not quite sure you get both sides of the fence on that one. It remains to be seen where this is going to go.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1018 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce three distinguished gentlemen in the west members' gallery to this House: Dr. Owen Slingerland, the former medical officer of health for York region and my predecessor in that role; Alan Wells, former chief administrative officer for York region and current chair of the Rouge Park Alliance, who had the difficult task of being my boss for 10 years; and Hershel Weinberg, the former commissioner of planning for York region and my husband.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am pleased to welcome to the House, in the members' gallery, Paul Ankrett. He's going to view proceedings today. He will be job shadowing Amy Swanson in my office for today. We look forward and welcome him to Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm quite honoured to introduce some special guests here at Queen's Park today. First, I'd like to introduce the mayor of Fort Erie, Doug Martin—I thank Doug for coming up here. As well, the former mayor of Fort Erie, John Teal, is with us today. Finally, the mayor of Port Colborne, Vance Badawey, is here as well.

I thank them for coming up with many of their people from their riding regarding their health care concerns.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to welcome Dick Smith, the mayor of Magnetawan, who is at Queen's Park today in the west members' gallery. He is down here concerned about the possible closure of the Burk's Falls health centre, along with a busload that will be arriving shortly.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome several young women from Glendale Secondary School, Green Acres elementary school and Delta Secondary School in my riding, who are at the Legislative Assembly to participate in the Equal Voice project.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome—I think he's making his way to the gallery—Jason Corbett, my former assistant in my constituency office who now works at One Kids Place, our fabulous children's treatment centre in North Bay.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I want to introduce seven students from a school—Mary Ward—in my constituency. They too are participating in the Equal Voice experience. This is a non-partisan organization that's dedicated to getting more women elected to office in this country, and I hope they have a positive experience here today.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to welcome Colonel Ribeiro da Silva and his spouse, as well as Mr. Henrique Santos and Dr. Manuel Tomas Ferreira, who are here joining us in the Legislature.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to introduce a constituent of mine who's a hard-working, professional person: Randy Arsenault, from the riding of Durham. Welcome, Randy.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to introduce David Ungar and Sara Hall from Parry Sound—Muskoka, who are here about the arts in Ontario.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to welcome in the gallery my friend Bob Redford.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to welcome the teachers and students from Westdale high school in my riding, who are here as part of the Equal Voice project today as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton and page Zachary Crichton, I'd like to welcome his mother, Theresa, his dad, Bill, and his sister Mackenzie sitting in the members' gallery today.

On behalf of the member for Parkdale—High Park and page Lara Watson, I'd like to welcome her mother Natalie, her father Randy, her sister Leah and her grandmother Catherine Pilcow, sitting in the west members' gallery.

There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. There's a saying that goes something like, "In

order to react best, you need to be prepared for the worst." Dr. Donald Low is a highly respected infectious disease specialist at Mount Sinai. He's quoted today regarding swine flu, saying that it's "too late to contain the disease, and efforts have turned to mitigating the damage."

There is a protest taking place at the Legislature today with people from communities across Ontario who are concerned about cuts to local health services and staff, and the fact that facilities are at unmanageable capacity, facilities that now may be faced with the impacts of swine flu. Premier, what are you doing to ensure that you are prepared to meet the challenges that Dr. Low says are inevitable?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the things that we continue to do, I say to my honourable colleague, is that we continue to increase our levels of funding for health care in Ontario. Notwithstanding the fact that inflation went up by about 11% since we first formed the government, we've increased funding for health care by about 45%. In this particular budget, notwithstanding the fact that we anticipate that the economy will shrink by 2.5%, we are increasing funding for health care by 4.7%.

It has been said that a budget is more than just a financial statement; it is a statement of our values. I think we are clearly demonstrating, through our budget, that we highly value health care for our families in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I remind the Premier that the former Conservative government increased health care spending by 60%, and he was highly critical.

The public accounts committee, in its February report on outbreak preparedness, asked the Minister of Health to report back on the number of public health units that have completed plans for establishing temporary influenza assessment treatment and referral centres. These flu centres are to be used by Ontarians when they think they may have flu symptoms and either they don't have a family doctor or their doctors' offices are overwhelmed. Premier, can you provide an update how many of the province's 36 local health units have currently developed plans for establishing flu centres?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that all of our public health units have plans in place to deal with these kinds of issues. I know as well that we have increased funding for public health care since 2003. We nearly tripled it; it has gone from \$233 million in 2003-04 to \$680 million in 2008-09.

I think that we were all jolted into taking some really important steps forward because of the SARS experience. We have learned much from that. We have invested heavily in new resources, we have more expertise and we have a solid plan in place, and I want to commend all of our health care personnel, led by our public health officials, for the way that they're reacting calmly and efficiently to the swine flu.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I asked a specific question about flu centres, and if the Premier can't answer it,

he should refer it to the minister instead of more political rhetoric.

We're hearing this week that we're going to see the first surge of migrant workers coming into Ontario—15,000 of them arriving to work on farms and in other sectors. Many of them will be in smaller and rural communities such as Leamington.

The president of the Ontario Nurses' Association has said that residents of Leamington and the surrounding area will suffer from cuts to nursing: "Any ideas that management may have of simply shipping patients to Windsor for care simply won't work—Windsor hospitals are already at capacity, with backlogs in ER, and they simply can't safely cope with more patients."

Premier, most communities, especially those in rural Ontario, have hospitals and emergency facilities that are at capacity today. What are you doing right now to ensure that you will be able to meet the surge capacity related to the potential outfall of swine flu?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, there's a very comprehensive plan that is in place. There's one at the provincial level, and there are individual plans at the public health unit level.

My colleague makes a good point about people who are coming in as migrant workers to help our economy, help our employers here and, frankly, help our communities in Ontario. We're going to continue to work with the federal government to ensure that those individuals are properly screened before they get on an airplane coming into Ontario. We will also ensure that our public health units have all the resources they need to do the job as they're called upon to do it.

We are going to continue to work well and hard with all of our colleagues as we deal with swine flu. Again, I want to commend Ontarians as well for the role that they have taken on understanding the importance of washing their hands and, if they're sick, staying home.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier: There's a tremendous amount of concern in this province about the lack of a plan when it comes to health care. In fact, we've got about 40 buses here today, with somewhere, it's anticipated, in the neighbourhood of 3,000 people coming. We now have the possibility of a swine flu outbreak. We have Dr. Tom Closson indicating that our health system is tight and our hospitals are running at 100% capacity. It's going to be difficult to deal with any outbreak that may happen. At the same time, we've got health cuts. That's why people are here today. They're losing their emergency departments. They're losing their hospitals. They're losing their outpatient services. Your policies are contributing to cuts in beds and cuts in nurses.

I ask you today: We have an opposition day motion; will you allow your backbenchers to support it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: Quite frankly, members will decide how they wish to vote on opposition day motions.

But in relation to a lot of the rhetoric and a lot of the comments by the member in the preamble to her question, they're simply off base. The fact of the matter is that there really is only one party that has cut health care in the province of Ontario: the member opposite's party when she sat on this side of the House—a 5.5% cut immediately to health care. It was, in fact, members on this side of the House who have seen, so far, about a 45% increase to the health care budgets in the province of Ontario. In fact, in our most recent budget, the finance minister has increased health care 4.7%.

I would urge the member, if she truly does wish to support health care, to support the budgetary policies of this government and the actions that this government is taking in order to improve care throughout the province of Ontario. I did—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm going to go to the Premier again, because I am tired of hearing the blame messages from the governing party. I would say to the Minister of Health, who seems to confuse the facts on a regular basis, we increased hospital funding by 41%. We increased health care funding by 60%. It's time that you stop it.

So I say to you today, we have a serious pandemic possibly facing us. We don't have the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just ask the honourable members to come to order, please.

Please continue.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Premier, it's time for your government to be on the side of the people. We've had the nurses protesting. We've had protests outside of hospitals. Today, there are 3,000 people protesting. When are you going to stand up and stop cutting health services?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, we've increased spending in hospitals. The member is simply wrong in her assertion. That member, as a part of the government, closed 28 hospitals in the province of Ontario. That member, as a part of the government, closed thousands of beds in this province. That member, as a part of the government, fired over 6,000 nurses in this province. The reality over the past five years has been quite a bit different.

Swine flu, and the potential that it has for our communities, is a very serious problem and a very serious challenge. That is why I'm very heartened when you have experts like Donald Low who say there has been a big shift and we really have come a long way. We had no way to respond to this six years ago. We didn't have the infrastructure; we didn't have the expertise; we didn't have the communication. Those are all there now—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, it's probably time to give this Premier and this minister another lesson in fact.

We opened five new cardiac centres, we opened the cancer treatment centres, we increased MRIs from 12 to 52 and we approved the replacement of 20 hospitals.

I would ask you today: Don't insult the people who are gathering on the front lawn. They're here for one reason and one reason only: You are cutting health services. They are concerned. They're losing beds; they're losing nurses; they're losing outpatient services and emergency rooms.

I ask you today: Are you suggesting that all these people out on that lawn are wrong for suggesting that your policies are responsible for these cuts?

Hon. David Caplan: I welcome anyone to Queen's Park. Unions and their supporters have a particular perspective. I don't share their perspective. We are on the side of patients in the province of Ontario.

The member provides factually incorrect information to this House, and I regret that she has done so. She was responsible, as a member of a government, for significant cuts to health care: the closure of 28 hospitals, the elimination of thousands of hospital beds, the firing of over 6,000 nurses. That's a sorry record of health care in the province of Ontario.

It has been because of this Premier and members on this side of the House that we have seen an increase of over 45% in health care spending in this province. We have seen an improvement in health care services. We have seen a lowering of wait times.

I'm very proud of the investments in public health, in community care, in long-term care and in our hospitals—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Four Ontarians are now confirmed to have the swine flu. The acting chief medical officer of health said yesterday: "I know we're going to see a lot more cases. It's only a matter of time."

My question is this: As Ontarians brace for more confirmed cases, is our health care system prepared to handle a possible huge surge in patient volumes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can say that we have drawn many lessons from a painful experience that happened to all of us in 2003. I have tremendous confidence in our public health officials. I have tremendous confidence in our doctors and nurses, and I have tremendous confidence in Ontarians themselves to remain calm and to do our part, to help us manage our way through these circumstances.

We need to be honest as well: We are not immune to these new strains of flu as they develop in some part of the world. We'll continue to do everything we can, working with our provincial and federal counterparts at the same time. We will do everything that we can, and everything that we should, to protect Ontarians. I have confidence in our team of experts right across the province as they work away at this very moment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: Well, we didn't talk about a surge in volumes, did we?

Yesterday, the Ottawa Citizen reported on hospital capacity in the Ottawa area. They talked about it. A local health care official said this in response to whether there will be enough nurses, doctors and hospitals to treat an influenza surge: "It's the million-dollar question because hospitals are at the edge in terms of their capacity already."

Already, Ontario hospitals are often over 100% capacity, often at 100%, which experts say compromises patient safety and quality of care. How will these capacity issues be resolved in the case of a swine flu outbreak?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Capacity always remains an issue, and we will do everything that we can and must in order to manage that.

One of the things I want to draw to my colleague's attention, and I think it's worth noting, is that we appear to be experiencing only a milder variation of the swine flu, in terms of its impact on people, here in Ontario. That's not to say that we might not experience another form, but I can say, again, that as a result of our new investments, we are much better prepared than we have been in the past. We have now, for example, five rapid response teams which are available to be deployed anywhere in Ontario in the event of a serious outbreak in one particular community. We have developed 14 regional infection control networks to better integrate infection prevention and control activities across the health care system. And we have now hired 166 hospital infection control practitioners, one for every 100 hospital beds. That's the best ratio in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

M^{me} France G  linas: New Democrats have long called for an adequate staffing of our hospitals, our public health units, our long-term-care facilities and our home care system, but this government's failure to properly staff and resource public health units means that Ontarians are at risk during an outbreak or a pandemic. Its failure to invest in long-term care and a functional home care system means our hospitals are overcrowded because of the ALC clients. Can the government assure Ontarians that our overburdened hospitals will be able to handle a pandemic if and when it happens?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can say that I have confidence in the people working in our hospitals and our broader public health sector and all our doctors and all our nurses. Again, I want to remind my honourable colleague that we have made considerable new investments in health care, a 45% overall increase in health care funding, notwithstanding the fact that inflation only went up by 11%. When it comes to public health alone, we have nearly tripled funding levels, from \$233 million to \$680 million.

There's always more to be done, but we've got to live in the real world. The real world calls for us to demon-

strate our continuing commitment to health care, and I think we've done that in a very measurable and demonstrable way.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Today, people from rural and small-town Ontario are demonstrating on the front lawn of Queen's Park because of what's happening to their local hospitals. My question is simple: Can the Premier tell me why Ontario has small and rural hospitals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: As I said, I welcome Ontarians to come. I understand that unions and their supporters will be here today, and I welcome them. I welcome all to this Legislature who wish to engage in these very important dialogues.

Change always brings anxiety. Any changes being made or proposed by hospitals or local health integration networks are focused on patient care. Sometimes that means shifting resources for the best benefit of patients. Every community is unique in terms of its location, its transportation infrastructure, its population or its access to care. We have launched a rural and northern health care review which brings experts together to advise the government on plans to further improve access to care in less populated areas.

Members on this side of the House value the care that is provided in rural and northern communities, and we'll continue to support them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I wouldn't say that it would fit as a thesis on rural and small hospitals, but I get from this that at least you are open and positive toward rural and small hospitals.

Yesterday in the Chatham Daily News, the Minister of Health said he will "establish the Northern and Rural Health Care Advisory Panel" to look into this matter. Rural and northern hospitals have been studied to death, I will say. They've been studied quite a bit. I can hold three reports from the last two years alone, the last one being on December 4, The Core Service Role of Small Hospitals in Ontario, Phase Three: The Future, prepared by JPPC. These reports were prepared for the Ministry of Health. Has the minister seen or read these reports, and if so, why is this government about to spend more time and money on a new advisory panel?

Hon. David Caplan: We want to ensure that we're supporting communities large and small across the province of Ontario. I am surprised that the member opposite doesn't share the commitment that members on this side do have.

In fact, the member leaves out quite conveniently, when she talks about Chatham, the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance and an investment of more than \$10.8 million in base funding at the Public General Hospital Society, a 26% increase, I would hasten to add, opposed by members opposite; more than \$3.2 million in base funding at

St. Joseph's Health Services Association, a 13% increase opposed by members opposite; more than \$2.7 million in base funding at the Sydenham District Hospital, a 17% increase opposed by members opposite.

We are going to continue to invest in small and rural—in fact, all hospitals in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I didn't get an answer to my question as to why he is establishing a northern and rural health care advisory panel, but I guess I'll keep on.

Mr. Paul Miller: Keep going.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This is question period, not answer period, I realize.

From Wallaceburg to Fort Erie, the McGuinty government wants to close small and rural hospitals and emergency departments. Hospitals across the north are being forced to cut care and services in order to balance their books. Why doesn't this minister listen to the people outside on the front lawn and at least place a moratorium on the cutbacks and closures of small and rural hospitals?

Hon. David Caplan: I know the member is familiar with the fact that in October 2007 we spoke to Ontarians about the kind of plans that all of us had for the provision of health care in Ontario. One of the very clear commitments that Liberal Party members made was to have a review of rural and northern hospitals in the province of Ontario. This is another example of a promise made and a promise kept by this government.

The member opposite presents information which is factually incorrect. There are no closures of rural hospitals; in fact, there have only been enhanced resources and supports for them. I welcome any individuals who wish to come to Queen's Park today. I know that unions and their supporters are here, and I welcome them to this debate and to any other. They have an important perspective. It is not one that I share. I share a view where the patient comes first, and we are bound and determined and members—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Health. A few months ago, a longtime resident of Sarnia-Lambton, Allister McCabe, needed an ultrasound-guided needle biopsy in order to confirm whether or not he had cancer. He was told that the procedure could be done immediately at St. Joseph's Health Care in London, but the hospital refused to see him and told him he needed to seek treatment at a hospital in his own area; in other words, his own local health integration network. Sarnia and London, for the minister's information, are not in the same LHIN, and the procedure needed was not quickly available in his home LHIN. We all know that with cancer, earlier detection means a better chance of survival. Unfortunately, Mr. McCabe has since passed away.

Minister, is it now government policy that patients can only receive treatment at hospitals within the boundaries of the LHIN in which they reside?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question. I certainly can't speak to the specifics of the case, but I can tell you that local health integration networks are part of our government's plan to transform the health care system to make it more patient-centred, efficient and accountable. They serve all Ontarians. Our health care system has no borders and no boundaries. For example, a woman from Sudbury or from Sarnia should be able to get care in Ottawa or in London, and a man in Ottawa should be able to get care in Sarnia or Sudbury.

The goal of local health integration networks is community-based care, reflecting the needs of the community, planned, coordinated and funded, but in an integrated manner, building a health care system around the needs of patients and communities. But ultimately, they serve all Ontarians.

I've answered the member's question directly. There are no borders and no boundaries when it comes to patient care in the province of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Minister, St. Joseph's Health Care in London has admitted in writing to the McCabe family that patients are to seek treatment in the LHIN in which they reside. Repatriation does, in fact, exist. In some cases, those treatments or procedures are not available closer to home, leaving these patients with little choice. This case falls on the heels of London Health Sciences refusing to take patients from Sarnia altogether unless they are near death.

Minister, you should admit the LHINs are a disaster. Hospitals clearly think geographic boundaries do exist when it comes to health care delivery. Instead of coordinating services, the LHINs are causing confusion, which is resulting in fatal consequences for patients. Will you act to fix the problems with the LHINs that do exist?

1100

Hon. David Caplan: As I said, there are no borders and there are no boundaries. We have a permeable system across the province where people can experience the kind of care and the kind of support they need.

I want to quote Gary Switzer, the CEO of the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network. He says, "What we really want is the best access for ... care in a timely fashion. If a procedure is available somewhere else, we need to get that point across to the referring physicians." Ralph Ganter of the Erie St. Clair LHIN said that there are no policies that would have caused the hospital to refuse care to someone from outside the LHIN. He says, "We're supposed to be a seamless, borderless health care system. We're not trying to put fences up around care"—and in fact, we don't.

We encourage quick, seamless and the efficient delivery of care for anyone, anywhere in the province. That's what LHINs are doing, that's what—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: This question's to the Premier. Why is this Liberal government shutting down the emergency rooms in the hospitals in Port Colborne and Fort Erie?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague will know that that is not in fact what we are doing. We have been motivated at all times when it comes to health care to bring about ever-improving quality of care.

There have been considerable increases in funding levels—I think it's 38% for the Niagara Health System—and we will continue to find more ways to provide more funding. I want to assure the people living in those communities that any changes that are being made are not driven by the dollars; they're driven by our desire, working with the local community, to improve the quality of care that is available to all those families.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Give your head a shake. How does locking the doors to an emergency room in Port Colborne or in Fort Erie improve the quality of health care for the folks who live in those communities?

This Premier hides behind a LHIN that is unelected, unaccountable, largely anonymous, arrogant and unresponsive to the communities it supposes to represent. Why won't this Premier explain to the people of Port Colborne and Fort Erie—and there are thousands of them out there right now—why he's shutting down their emergency rooms?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A few things: First of all, I think it's important for us to work with the LHINs. They are the people who we recognize in the communities who are to provide leadership, and LHINs shape the local decision-making. We think it's important to work with those people.

As well, I think it's important to understand that when it comes to the two hospitals in question, at present, if you were suffering from severe trauma or a heart attack or a stroke and found yourself in an ambulance, the ambulances would drive by those two hospitals to larger centres. In fact, they're driving to larger centres because the larger centres have more equipment and they have a specialist on site.

This is all about ensuring that we're bringing home to people, in the closest possible way, the best quality of care. That's what's motivating this decision-making. I understand it's controversial, I understand it's very emotional for the folks there, but I want them to understand it's about improving quality of care.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Minister, in last month's Toronto Star, we read about a \$4.7-million investment through the Minister of Research and Innovation's Ontario Research Fund to a Toronto lab run by Dr. Aled Edwards. Open Access Science is an approach to research and commercialization used by Dr. Edwards in the Structural

Genomics Consortium, which is based in the University of Toronto and is dedicated to advancing global biomedical research.

The Structural Genomics Consortium is a not-for-profit organization that aims to determine the three-dimensional structures of proteins of medical relevance and place them in the public domain without restriction. It operates in the Universities of Oxford and Toronto, and the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm. As a top researcher and thought-leader, Dr. Edwards continues to attract brilliant young researchers from around the world. That means a competitive Ontario, a more vibrant research community and the development of new jobs and industries.

What is the Minister of Research and Innovation doing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question. I think it's something that all of us in this House can be proud of. The Ontario Research Fund, funded through the Ministry of Research and Innovation, just made an investment of some \$4.7 million, but that is in addition to the investments that have been made by our government and previous governments in the globally significant research that's being led by Dr. Aled Edwards at the University of Toronto. He is working with top researchers at Oxford University in England and the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden, unlocking not the genome but the body's ability to take the information that's contained in our genome and create proteins, and actually to have three-dimensional pictures of those proteins. If we can do that, if we can unlock that, it means that when it comes to medicines, we're going to be able to tailor-make the types of medicines we need in our communities to alleviate human suffering.

It's something we're very proud of. This open-access concept that Dr. Aled Edwards has is globally significant, and we're proud of his—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Trent University, located in the great riding of Peterborough, has established a reputation on the international stage for its groundbreaking research. Trent has six strategic research clusters: biological and forensic sciences; Canadian and indigenous studies; cultural studies and the humanities; education, health and sustainability; environmental science, material science and quantitative modelling; and, finally, understanding people, communities and institutions.

The quality of the research can be seen in the number of research chairs who call Trent their home. These research chairs aim to strengthen research excellence in Canada, improve the training of the highly qualified personnel through research, and improve universities' capacity to generate and apply new knowledge.

What is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing to ensure research chairs such as these continue to conduct research at Trent and across the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the MPP for Trent University for the question. We've made an investment of some \$8 million into a number of cutting-edge labs in Trent, but I want to talk about our \$2-million investment in the International Consortium on Anti-Virals.

The world today is trying to get ahead of Mother Nature. Mother Nature has introduced a new virus into this world and it's our researchers who are working in the field of anti-virals who will come up with vaccines and a solution to that challenge that Mother Nature is presenting us.

Now, more than ever, it is important for our scientists to be able to do this type of work. It is something that we're all expecting our scientists to do, and we're particularly proud that at Trent University, this International Consortium on Anti-Virals is leading the world in our response to this new threat provided by Mother Nature. That's why that type of research, which is going on in your home community, is so important—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Health. A busload of Almaguin residents are here at Queen's Park today, gravely concerned that you're going to shut down the Burk's Falls health centre. We have leaders in the community here. We have the mayor of Magnetawan here, Dick Smith; the reeve of Burk's Falls, Cathy Still; the reeve of Ryerson township, Glen Miller; and Bruce Campbell, councillor for Burk's Falls.

Can you assure the residents and the community leaders that you will not be reducing health services in the Almaguin area and that the Burk's Falls health centre will be kept open?

Hon. David Caplan: I can assure the members opposite and the people who are visiting here today that we're going to continue what we're doing, which is expanding the amount of resources available to hospitals in the province of Ontario. In fact, this is what we have seen in this province since the year 2003.

I note, for the member opposite, that he supports a leadership candidate, I understand, who is a frontrunner for their party who supports cutting and reopening the deal on physicians' salaries and nurses' salaries and has further proposed the elimination of the Ontario health premium, which would amount to a \$3-billion cut to health care.

This member can speak and articulate now that he does not support those kinds of measures because of the damage that that would do to our health care system. Members on this side of the House will stand up for health care, will stand up for those communities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: I asked a very straightforward question and you decided to give me a partisan answer, which is not very much appreciated.

In the Almaguin Highlands-Burk's Falls area, we have an aging population. We have a population that swells greatly in the summer months, beyond the health care centre's capacity in the summer months. In addition, other hospitals in the area are often at or over capacity, and they're full of individuals who could be better cared for in other parts of the health care system; those are the ALC patients. This signals a larger crisis in our health care system which this minister fails to address.

Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has been asking for funding for years. Not only does the Burk's Falls health centre need to stay open, it needs funds to successfully meet the needs of the community. Will you give your word to the concerned Almaguin residents that the funding they've been pushing for, and that I've been presenting petitions daily on, will be coming forward to help sustain the Burk's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

1110

Hon. David Caplan: The member opposite wants to cut health care spending, yet asks, "Will you continue to spend more?" The member's got to figure out whose side he is on here.

The member mentions ALC. Alternative level of care is a tremendous challenge in the province of Ontario; I acknowledge that. We are working on developing strategies like our aging-at-home strategy—\$1.1 billion over four years—to be able to build the kind of community capacity and to be able to support communities. On top of that, so far, we have invested an additional \$1 billion in long-term care, fully a 50% increase.

I do say to the member: He will have some explaining to do. He supports a leader for their party who wishes to cut \$3 billion in health care. He supports a leader for his party who wants to reopen the agreements for our nurses and doctors—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The new report by the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario and Cancer Care Ontario says that wait times for chemotherapy in Ontario are growing longer. Last year, the wait times for 90% of the patients averaged 73 days. Cancer Care Ontario recommends waiting no longer than 28 days before you start your treatment. Why are Ontarians with cancer being forced to wait nearly three times longer than they should for life-saving treatment?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question, and I want to thank Cancer Care Ontario for the report.

Dr. Terry Sullivan, the president and CEO of Cancer Care Ontario, said, "We're a victim of our own success with chemotherapy ... we have more people living longer and being re-treated ... which means busier and more

crowded (chemotherapy) suites in hospital cancer centres."

Overall, cancer surgery wait times are down by 30%. We've invested \$600 million annually to Cancer Care Ontario, the ministry's primary adviser on adult cancer services. We are working closely with Cancer Care Ontario to develop a regional systemic treatment plan to improve quality chemotherapy services for people as close to home as possible.

I think I've answered that question. Dr. Sullivan says we've been tremendously successful, and we are victims of it. The members opposite may not like—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: So we are to get from this that we wait longer because we live longer. If nobody knew that people in Ontario were living longer—I think everybody knew that, and I sure hope our Minister of Health would know that also.

The cancer treatment report also found that in some areas, people had to wait for 117 days. That's four times the recommended wait time. Those are long days when you are worried about dying of cancer and you cannot get access to treatment that may save your life.

The McGuinty government has reportedly boasted about reducing wait times, but cancer treatment wait times are increasing. What will the government do to reverse this trend?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the member is incorrect: Cancer wait times are down 30%. In fact, the government is working with Cancer Care Ontario and putting the resources that we have, so that we expect to see further advances.

For example, we launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program: some 34,000 more colonoscopies in Ontario and funding approximately 130,000 more over five years. We introduced free vaccines to protect young women against the human papilloma virus. That means 40,000 girls in grade 8 will have protection against the two most high-risk types of cancer. We've extended the breast cancer screening program by adding 100,000 more scans per year and 34 new breast cancer screening sites in Ontario. We've expanded access to cancer testing by funding the PSA test for the first time in the province of Ontario. And since 2006, we've added 21—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, as many in this Legislature are aware, last week was an important week in Ontario and indeed in Canada: National Volunteer Week.

I, like many members in this Legislature, am keenly aware of the impact that volunteers have in our community. In fact, Minister, we were pleased to welcome you to

Kitchener for the Wellington-Waterloo awards, as well as your parliamentary assistant on one of the other evenings.

One of the groups that we honoured there were students from my hometown, from the University of Guelph, who have a food program that has been recognized provincially. One of their signature events is Halloween evening, when they borrow grocery carts from the local grocery store and collect food for a local food bank.

Minister, can you please tell the Legislature about some of the other activities that took place during National Volunteer Week?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for her question. She is correct: Volunteers do build communities. During National Volunteer Week, the government of Ontario is pleased to recognize the contributions of volunteers from all over the province.

On April 20, I had the pleasure of joining the Lieutenant Governor for the presentation of the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. Eight outstanding Ontario youths, including Miles Hoffman, from Pickle Lake, in northwestern Ontario, were recognized for their exceptional contributions to the province of Ontario. Miles was recognized for being the go-to person for just about any and every volunteer task you can imagine, all the while being the only volunteer on the Pickle Lake recreation committee.

Volunteerism is working wonderfully in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: One statistic that never ceases to amaze me is the youth volunteerism rate here in Ontario. The volunteerism rate for youth in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 is 63%, the highest level in Canada. In fact, Ontario youth have the highest-percentage volunteerism rate of any group in Canada, and contribute, on average, 138 volunteer hours per year.

Minister, the ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge is in its second year. On Saturday, I was pleased to visit the Guelph program, where the student volunteers were just returning from experiences like the humane society and children's camps and tree nurseries, and had a great day.

Minister, can you please share some information with the Legislature about the government's efforts to support youth volunteerism in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for her question.

This year, interest in the ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge has been higher than ever. My ministry, working with volunteer centres in 19 communities around Ontario, challenged 10,000 Ontario youths to donate five hours of their time during National Volunteer Week. I'm pleased to say that, from the preliminary data, Ontario's youth have responded.

After a very successful launch event in the member's home municipality, interest in the youth challenge has exploded. Hundreds of youths have joined the ChangeTheWorld Facebook group, and well over 10,000 unique hits have been counted on my ministry's website.

Together, we have reached thousands of youths through the ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge.

HOSPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you have done nothing to ensure that the physical structures of most aging hospitals are ready for a pandemic.

The Sault Ste. Marie hospital's coroner's report on the C. difficile outbreak sat on the health minister's desk for over a year. This report clearly identified aging infrastructure as one of the key contributors to the severity of the outbreak.

Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington has outdated infrastructure, Minister, a point you are clearly aware of. This may have contributed to the severity of the C. diff outbreak in Burlington.

Minister, how can you reassure the residents of Burlington, and all Ontarians in communities with aging hospitals, that you are ready for a pandemic, when you have done nothing to address this critical underlying issue?

1120

Hon. David Caplan: I've got to tell you, the member asks a rather odd question, given the fact that Ontario has undertaken over 100 health care capital projects in communities right across this province.

I do acknowledge that there is more to do, and Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital is one that is very much on our radar. But I think the member's rhetoric that nothing has happened is not in keeping with the facts as we are seeing them across the province of Ontario. I know the member would want to acknowledge the work that my colleague and Infrastructure Ontario have done on generic output specs, for the very first time, where we have identified infectious disease control as a part of hospital design. It did not exist previously.

The member should get her facts right, because she clearly does not know what she's talking about. She should go to the two dozen different—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I do have my facts right. The people of Burlington have sent over \$600 million to this province and they have received \$17 million back. You do the math. Our aging infrastructure is not fixed.

I walked past tourists today on the sidewalk of this Legislature. They were taking photos and had their masks on. People are doing what is within their control to avoid getting sick.

Minister, this is not just about a pandemic plan. You have the responsibility, the authority and the control to ensure that our aging hospitals are ready to deal with any pandemic. If you are to continue to claim that your ministry and our hospitals are fully ready to deal with a pandemic, then will you commit to making the necessary investments in our aging physical infrastructure in com-

munities across Ontario to enable them to fight this with effective tools? Will you allocate staff and resources to the aging, at-risk hospitals?

Hon. David Caplan: The member and her party have consistently opposed all of the actions that we have taken to modernize and invest in the infrastructure of the province of Ontario. We have projects right across this province, over 100 in size and scope, to be able to address precisely these issues.

There is nothing less than an infrastructure renaissance that is taking place in this province when it comes to the health care infrastructure that we have. This member is out to lunch. She just does not get it. She does not get the extraordinary steps that this government has taken when it comes to making these kinds of investments.

I do acknowledge that there is more to be done. That is why I am working with my colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure on developing the plans for additional—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Minister of Training: This week, the University of Toronto's business board approved a plan to charge students in the arts and sciences tuition fees for five courses even when they take three or four. The hundreds of students I spoke to on Monday oppose it, New Democrats oppose it, and the public believes it's unfair. Why is the minister allowing a flat fee?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm of course aware that the University of Toronto is looking into the possibility of a flat fee. I understand that no decision has been made.

But I should remind the member that universities have been able to charge tuition fees for students on a program or flat-fee basis for many years. In fact, I understand the University of Toronto has some courses where that already exists. The policy has been in place for decades. Carleton University, my alma mater, has been charging flat fees for the past 25 years.

What is important is that any change of this nature, which may ultimately come from the University of Toronto, corresponds with the province's tuition fee framework, which not only limits tuition fees but also mandates universities to provide students with assistance to make sure that finances are never an obstacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If the source of the students' grief at the University of Toronto is this government's tuition fee framework, then it's time to change the framework.

It's 2009, and this government's lack of leadership and vision has left students burdened with debt and without job prospects. Today, the students are carrying the burden of the economy on their shoulders. Today, they tell you that they can't pay for five courses when they take three.

Will this government bring fairness to post-secondary education or will it continue to allow a flat fee that leaves students flat on their backs?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a little bit rich, coming from the New Democratic Party. How dare he stand up and say we don't have a vision when it comes to student assistance in this province. Since we took office, we have more than doubled the rate of student assistance for students in the province of Ontario. Ontario students currently receive the highest level of non-repayable assistance ever. OSAP loan default rates are the lowest they've ever been since measurement began: 8.4% this year.

Let me share more statistics. We've tripled the number of grants available to students. In fact, one in four students—approximately 120,000 Ontario students—receive non-repayable grants. Does the member remember non-repayable, upfront grants? His government cancelled them.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

Interjections.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I have a good question here; you have to listen.

Minister, road safety is important—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would appreciate some quiet all around. It would be most beneficial, especially for our guests here, who like to hear these very important questions that are being asked.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Road safety in this province is very important for all of us, especially for people like us who drive on a regular basis from our constituency to this place. Helping to keep Ontario roads safe is every Ontarian's responsibility. Minister, it's so frustrating when you read the newspaper and watch the news and you see a lot of accidents because people choose to drink and drive, which causes a lot of injuries and also costs the taxpayers a lot of money—close to billions of dollars on a regular basis.

Minister, I understand that there are measures being implemented shortly to help—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Good question. The member is correct: Not only is the financial cost to Ontario estimated at \$3 billion annually; drunk driving still accounts for 25% of all fatalities on Ontario roads. We would all agree that that's completely unacceptable. These are just some of the reasons that we have moved forward with new measures for those who are caught driving in the "warn" range, meaning a blood-alcohol concentration between 0.05 and 0.08.

Effective May 1, 2009, the current 12-hour licence suspensions for drivers who blow in the "warn" range will increase to three days for a first occurrence; seven days plus enrolment in a remedial alcohol education pro-

gram for a second occurrence; and for a third occurrence, 30 days, a remedial alcohol treatment program and an ignition interlock condition on the driver's licence for a minimum of six months.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister, for this important news. I'm going to share this information with my constituents. Minister, I believe our partners will also be happy, especially the police, who work very hard and closely with your ministry to implement those measures in order to create safety for the people of this province.

But, Minister, I'm a little bit confused about the escalation sanctions which you're implementing. What's the difference between the sanctions already in place and the ones you will implement May 1? Can you tell this House and tell me in detail what that is going to mean to the people of Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: We heard from our police and road safety partners that more needed to be done. That's why we passed Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, and are putting in place escalating sanctions for those caught driving in the "warn" range. Almost 17% of drinking drivers killed in Ontario had a blood-alcohol concentration of less than 0.08, the legal limit. Those driving in the "warn" range are seven times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision.

At 12 hours, Ontario currently has the shortest initial suspension period of any province. By increasing this penalty to escalating sanctions, we'll make a difference. If a licence is suspended under this program, once the suspension period is up, the driver will have to pay a \$150 reinstatement fee at any driver's licensing office to be fully reinstated.

This is something that is accepted by all political parties and has been a cause of all governments and parties over the years, and we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1130

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Health. We have thousands of people at the front door demonstrating in support of their small rural hospitals in Ontario. These citizens are among thousands of Ontarians who are concerned about the closure and elimination of services in their community hospitals. The official opposition, as you know, has filed a notice of motion to debate today why the McGuinty government has no plan to deal with hospital deficits and protect patient services.

On March 31, Minister, I did ask a question about the Lakeridge Health Bowmanville hospital in my riding. They are worried and have concerns about the loss of services at their hospital.

Minister, what is your response to people like Jeff Wesley or Conrad Noel from Save Our Sydenham, or Dr. Tony Stone or John Reid about the services that are provided at the Bowmanville hospital? What is your answer to these people?

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question, because our government is committed to providing quality care for all Ontarians, regardless of where they live in this province. We recognize the challenges that rural and northern communities do face, and our government is committed to examining these issues and providing a provincial framework to support northern and rural communities, as we had committed to during the election campaign of 2007. To that end, we're creating a northern and rural health care panel to provide recommendations to identify the unique needs of health care in those communities.

But I would add for the member's sake that hospital funding in Ontario has increased from \$11 billion to \$15.5 billion in 2009-10. That's a 37% increase in funding. That includes meeting an expected 2.1% base funding increase, but on top of that, health care funding is increasing 4.7%—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, it's clear today from all of the questions that you really want to blame others while, in fact, you're doing nothing. Our critic, Ms. Witmer, has made it clear to you that we committed in government to improve services. What are you going to do? How are you going to answer the people who are here today demonstrating to you that they are concerned about their hospitals in all small towns in the province of Ontario?

Minister, you want to talk about the numbers. Talk about the people. Talk about the families who have been denied services in this province under your watch. What is your plan? Rather than blaming the LHINs or the hospital boards, what are you saying to the people of Ontario to ensure that their services in their local hospitals aren't cut? What's the answer today?

Hon. David Caplan: I say to the member opposite that your record when you were in government was that you closed 28 hospitals. Your record when you were in government was that you closed thousands of hospital beds. Your record, sir, when you were in government, I say through the Speaker, was to fire thousands of nurses. It has been the reverse under members on this side of the House under the leadership of Premier McGuinty.

This member and his party have an avowed promise to eliminate the Ontario health premium. That would amount to a \$3-billion cut to health care. I reject that kind of approach. I reject an approach which in fact sees small and rural communities under attack. I choose an approach which invests in those communities, which supports them, which has a view not only in the hospital, but in the community through an aging-at-home strategy and through investments in long-term care.

This member really should learn the facts and really understand what's going—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. You can file it at the appropriate time.

Start the clock. The member from Timmins-James Bay.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you'll know that people in the city of Timmins have been organizing a petition now for a couple of months and have signed up about 5,000 people on that petition to bring the Ontario Northland train back into Porcupine in order to be able to service the people of the city of Timmins.

My question to you on behalf of those people simply is this: Are you prepared to entertain such a plan?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question from the member. Obviously, we are very supportive of the Ontario Northland and the ONTC in general. Our commitment has been very, very clear. I have not had the opportunity to see that petition, but I will look forward to getting more details on it from the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: People in the city of Timmins wonder why it is that the largest city in northeastern Ontario that is serviced by the Ontario Northland, other than North Bay, doesn't have a train coming to it since 1989.

The question is very simply this: People in the city of Timmins are prepared to work with this government in order to be able to bring services back into the city of Timmins. The rail line is there; we're already servicing Xstrata. The train is already going into Connaught. All that is needed is a platform and some co-operation from Ontario Northland to bring the train back. The question again: Are you prepared to do it?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question from the member, and indeed we are very pleased with the support that our government has provided to the ONTC. We certainly are pleased about the new Northlander train schedule that went in not long ago, resulting in a 20% increase in passengers. We are proud of the work that has been done to replace approximately 168,000 railway ties on the 700 miles of rail network. We're very pleased about the \$81-million contract to refurbish 121 GO Transit commuter rail cars in a retooling-refurbishing job.

So, as always, I'm glad to hear from the member about any suggestions, and I'll certainly be pleased to talk to the mayor of Timmins, whom I happened to see this morning. In fact, I say to the member, that issue did not come up as an issue that he was bringing forward. But as always, I'm glad to hear from the member.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Burlington has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health concerning the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener-Waterloo has given notice of her dissatis-

faction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health concerning the government's health policies. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Sarnia-Lambton has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning geographic barriers to health services provision. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'm privileged today, on behalf of all members of the Legislature, to welcome three very important guests from the riding of Etobicoke North: Dr. Patricia Keith and Michelle and Margaret Kolodzieczyk. They are members of the Break Free Family Centre and do extraordinary work for youth engagement and community building in my riding. We're pleased to have all of you here.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to introduce my husband, John Munro, who's in the gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and page Zachary Crichton, we'd like to welcome his mother, Theresa Crichton, and his sister Mackenzie, sitting in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NAIL AND SAIL

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Today I would like to tell you about an exciting fundraiser and awareness event happening in Toronto this summer. It is called the Nail and Sail, in support of the Canadian international humanitarian organization Right to Play, taking place at Ashbridge's Bay on the Lake Ontario waterfront on Thursday, June 25.

Nail and Sail will see teams of 10 people building boats from supplied materials and then racing their crafts across a 500-metre course on Lake Ontario. The more money you raise, the more materials you get to build a better boat and win the race.

For those unfamiliar with Right to Play, this is one of Ontario's and Canada's greatest success stories. Right to Play's mission is to improve the lives of children in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the world by using the power of sport and play for development, health and peace. With international headquarters right here in Toronto, Right to Play works in 23 countries in the developing world and is currently reaching more than 600,000 children each week with their programs.

Right to Play is supported by more than 300 amateur and professional athletes in Canada—people like Wayne

Gretzky, Hayley Wickenheiser, Silken Laumann, Clara Hughes, Beckie Scott and many, many more.

Earlier this morning, Right to Play athlete ambassadors Marnie McBean and Jennifer Botterill helped launch Nail and Sail at the media event in Toronto. I plan to be volunteering at Nail and Sail on June 25 and ask others to also get involved in support of this fantastic cause.

Please visit www.nailandsail.com. This is an organization all Ontarians should be proud of.

TOURISM

Mr. Pat Hoy: The Ontario government recognizes the important role that festivals and events play in enhancing local economies and increasing tourism province-wide. Celebrate Ontario is a program that supports new and existing tourism festivals and events by enhancing programs, activities and services that lead to long-term improvements, attract more tourists and increase tourism spending.

I'm pleased to announce that this year's Celebrate Ontario is investing \$135,619 in four organizations in Chatham-Kent. Congratulations to the historic Downtown Chatham BIA, who will be holding the 2009 RetroFest from May 22 to 24; Park Street Centre for the Gregor's Crossing Medieval Faire from May 28 to 31; the Tilbury BIA and Chamber of Commerce for Tilbury Fun Fest from June 26 to 28; and the Rotary Club of Chatham Sunrise for the Rotary Ribfest from July 3 to 5. I encourage everyone to attend these exciting events and discover Chatham-Kent.

Tourism is an important job creator, an economic driver for communities all across the province. Thank you to the many dedicated volunteer organizers for their contribution to Ontario's economy. Chatham-Kent looks forward to welcoming the many visitors who will be attending.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This afternoon, the Standing Committee on General Government will be meeting to make amendments to Bill 150, the so-called Green Energy Act. As our caucus has pointed out in this Legislature over the past two months, there are many, many parts of this bill that need to be corrected.

We all know that it's going to result in huge cost increases to the people and businesses across Ontario.

We support green energy and environmentally responsible solutions, but we need to be smart about how we do it. For instance, we need to ensure that we are not sacrificing the future of our agriculture industry by covering prime agricultural land with energy projects that could go to other locations.

We are not alone in this belief. In recent commentary, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "OFA does not support solar farms that would take agricultural land out of food production." In a presentation to the standing committee, the Association of Mu-

nicipalities of Ontario said that "ground-mount solar projects should not be permitted on class 1, 2 or 3 agricultural lands."

We believe in the importance and the future of our agriculture industry. That's why the PC caucus tabled an amendment to Bill 150 in committee today that restricts the installation of solar farms on prime agricultural land. If the government supports agriculture, this is the time to prove it. Vote to support our amendment and to protect agriculture by ensuring that solar farms cannot be located on prime agricultural lands in the province of Ontario.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My constituency of Oak Ridges–Markham is home to a remarkable initiative in solar and wind energy. With the help of family, friends and neighbours, my constituent Bob James has installed both a wind turbine and solar panels at his farm residence in Whitchurch-Stouffville. The wind turbine generates alternating current, and the six-panel solar system tracks the sun and comes equipped with an inverter which converts the energy into AC power. Battery backups provide optimal storage of generated energy.

The James family decided to spend approximately \$40,000 on having these technologies purchased, installed and functioning. They were able to claim approximately \$8,000 in rebates under the Ontario PowerHouse program, which is funded by the Ministry of Energy. The power generated supplies 35% of the James's family's annual energy needs, saving them \$900 annually.

Minister George Smitherman joined me last week at the James residence to view the installation. We were able to see first-hand how green energy projects help better protect our environment, combat climate change and create a healthier future for our children.

I applaud our government for introducing the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. We are fostering a culture of conservation and encouraging the use of renewables.

Congratulations to the James family in being pioneers in the use of green energy.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Julia Munro: As many in this House may know, I was a high school teacher for 28 years. One of the things I learned was that when a large number of students stand up for the rights of a fellow student, it's time for those in authority to start listening.

We have all read in the paper that a 15-year-old Keswick student faces charges for defending himself against a bully. According to the reports, the student is a black belt in martial arts, and when he was assaulted by another student, he responded by punching his attacker and breaking his nose.

I would never tell the police or the courts how to resolve a case; an MPP should not interfere. But I just have to ask: Are the anti-bullying policies that this gov-

ernment trumpets actually working, or do we have a system that treats bullies and victims who defend themselves the same?

No one approves of violence, but a student who defends himself from violence is not equivalent to an attacker. One of the oldest concepts in our common law is the right to self-defence. Anti-bullying policies should never require a victim to simply turn the other cheek, and this government should make that clear.

VAISAKHI

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise today to acknowledge the Ontario Sikh and Gurdwara Council's annual Khalsa/Vaisakhi parade, which was held last Sunday at Toronto city hall. Vaisakhi is an important holiday for Sikhs across the world. Vaisakhi is a Sikh new year festival that celebrates the annual harvest. This holiday also commemorates the year 1699, the year Sikhism was born as a collective faith.

In Ontario, we recognize, respect and celebrate all faiths and religions. We, as a society, are open and welcoming toward other people's faiths and beliefs. We live in a province where you can experience different cultures and diversities on a daily basis. This is what makes Ontario so special.

1510

I would like to recognize my colleagues from this side of the House who made the effort of joining all the participants at this year's parade. The master of ceremonies especially noted and recognized the large attendance by the Liberal caucus. It would have been nice to see a few more faces from across the aisle at this parade to celebrate this province's greatest diversity and the more important role that the Sikh community plays.

Nonetheless, all participants had a great time, and I personally look forward to attending next year's parade.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France G  linas: Today at Queen's Park, people from smaller communities came to express their concerns about the cuts to their community hospitals. These small and rural community hospitals often serve as an entrance point to the health care system. When the McGuinty government decides to close these hospital emergency departments, people's needs don't go away; people's needs don't change. What will change is that all the people from rural Ontario will have to travel longer to regional hospitals, but regional hospitals usually cost more—not a wise move, but this government seems bent on cutting services at small, rural community hospitals throughout our province.

I also want to talk about bigger tertiary-care hospitals: the one in my region, the Sudbury Regional Hospital. The good people at Sudbury Regional Hospital are looking in every nook and cranny to find \$12 million worth of savings, because they have a \$12-million deficit. I have no doubt that if they have to balance their books in this

fiscal year, the hospital will make cuts to care, to service, to programs, to procedures and to staff. But there are better solutions out there that are available with the right political will.

First, recognize Sudbury Regional Hospital's role as a teaching hospital. Second, acknowledge that the ALC crisis is not of their doing.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL COLLEGIATE AND VOCATIONAL INSTITUTE

Mr. Bill Mauro: Students of my Thunder Bay alma mater, Sir Winston Churchill Collegiate and Vocational Institute Trojans cheerleading squad recently placed first in the level-four senior school division. This was the highest level of difficulty at the CheerExpo national cheerleading competition in Halifax. The group of 33 students from grades 9 to 12 competed with flawless performances. The team also held the honour of maintaining a team average of 80% throughout their season from October to April. The athletes, coaches and parents all worked together to raise funds for their trip to Halifax, including hosting two junior cheerleading competitions and a spaghetti dinner.

I would like to salute the talented cheerleading squad and their wonderful coaching and mentoring staff. These coaches, staff advisers and coach assistants include Heather Campbell, Krista Beange, Kiirsti Rathje, Torie Forsythe, Robyn Hamlyn and Paige Fenelon. I want to thank them for their dedication in bringing out the best in their students, which led to this outstanding athletic achievement.

I would also like to salute the Churchill Programmers, who took first and third prizes in the Lakehead University software competition recently. Tim Schoenberger took first prize and a \$500 award for his video game, The Adventures of Mr. Hat. Craig Macsemchuk and Andrea Warywoda won third prize and a \$300 cash award for their JNet Filter project. Congratulations also to Casey Howard and Cody Zellweger for a strong project.

SHINHAN BANK

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to welcome Shinhan Bank of Korea president and CEO Mr. Baek Soon Lee to Ontario. Mr. Lee attended last night's grand opening of Shinhan Bank's first branch in Canada, located in my riding of Willowdale.

Shinhan Bank is Korea's first bank. It was established under the name Hanseong Bank in 1897. Reorganized in 1982, Shinhan Bank is a subsidiary of the Shinhan Financial Group, South Korea's second-largest financial holding company. Today, the bank has 42 units in 12 countries and 22,000 employees.

On a recent trip to South Korea, Minister Papatello met with representatives of Shinhan Bank, and learned more about the company's business expansion plans for

Ontario and discussed government plans to help the bank proceed with their expansion.

In October 2008, the bank opened its Canadian head office here in Toronto, and in March 2009, their first branch office. Both are located in Willowdale.

Shinhan Bank recognizes the great value of banking opportunities here in Ontario. The province of Ontario is proud to welcome Shinhan Bank to Toronto. I would like to wish it much success as it grows and prospers here in the great province of Ontario.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question by the Minister of Health concerning cuts to services and closings at the Bowmanville and Uxbridge hospitals. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Joe Dickson: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 154, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of organ donor leave / Projet de loi 154, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé pour don d'organe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Mr. Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: During ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the McGuinty government to introduce legislation that would, if passed, help to ensure fair access to entertainment tickets.

I would like to thank Minister Takhar of small business and consumer services for his close co-operation and support throughout the development of these proposed amendments.

Ontarians work hard. They work to support their families and support our economy. As we all work our way through these lean economic times, we must be able to count on principles that have carried us through challenging times in the past, and one of those principles is the importance of fair business practices.

Recently, Ontario consumers have joined the chorus of voices expressing concern and frustration over unfair ticket resale practices in Ontario. Their frustration stems from the concern that companies may make tickets available for sale to popular Ontario events on the primary market, and then, on the secondary market at much higher prices.

The McGuinty government wants to do something about this, and so today we're moving forward on our commitment to protect Ontario consumers.

Cette loi, si elle est adoptée, permettra d'assurer un accès juste aux billets de spectacles en interdisant à des vendeurs principaux et secondaires liés, dont des agents et des courtiers, de mettre en vente des billets d'entrée pour les mêmes événements.

This legislation would, if passed, help to ensure fair access to entertainment tickets by prohibiting related primary and secondary ticket sellers, including agents and brokers, from selling tickets to the same events.

Going a step further, an individual fine of up to \$5,000 and a corporate fine of up to \$50,000 would be created in order to deal with any violations of the new rule.

There are a number of different arrangements by which tickets are sold in Ontario, but our objective in all of this is simple: to ensure fairness for Ontarians.

We're all acutely aware that these are challenging economic times, and during these times, when every dollar counts and everyone is working to ensure they get the best value for their dollar, it is vital that we take the

necessary steps to safeguard consumer protection and ensure that fairness continues to be a cornerstone of business practices in Ontario.

As we move forward in our efforts, we'll continue to watch out for the best interests of Ontarians and ensure that, at a minimum, they receive the same protections as consumers in other jurisdictions.

I know that there are many members in this House, some of whom are sitting across from me now, who have been anticipating the introduction of this legislation because they believe, as I do, that Ontario consumers deserve protection, they deserve fairness and they deserve to know that when they raise their voices in protest, their government will listen.

So today I call on the members of this House to support these proposed amendments. This is about fairness. We are determined to ensure that Ontarians have fair access to entertainment tickets for events taking place in the province.

1520

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

Hon. John Gerretsen: Today is the ninth annual Environment Industry Day here at Queen's Park. It's sponsored by the Ontario Environment Industry Association.

Since its founding in 1991, ONEIA has been an effective advocate for an industry that is a driving force in protecting the environment and building a strong, sustainable economy in this province.

Ontario's environment companies make a huge contribution to our quality of life. They are playing a key role in shaping how our province transforms itself into a strong, sustainable and prosperous economy.

These are companies that have shown us that a strong economy and a healthy environment are not mutually exclusive goals. They help create the new world we live in today, a world where economic growth and prosperity must go hand in hand with sound environmental stewardship.

It's now my pleasure to recognize a number of members from ONEIA who were in the gallery earlier today: Alex Gill, who has been ONEIA's executive director; Mark Vanderheyden, the chair of ONEIA; Skip Willis, the chair of Environment Industry Day; and the members of the Ontario Environment Industry Association.

I would just remind all the members that there will be a reception tonight in the Legislative dining room from 5 to 7 o'clock, and of course everybody is invited to that.

I really hope that everyone gets a chance to speak today with our friends from the Ontario Environment Industry Association. They will be happy to tell you about their progress in bringing leading-edge solutions to Ontario and the rest of the world. It's a job that they're doing extremely well.

There are more than 2,600 companies in Ontario's environment industry. The mostly small or medium-sized

enterprises are vitally important to our economy in this province. These companies generate over \$8 billion in annual revenues and employ more than 60,000 people.

It is a fast-paced sector. It continues to grow, but it also faces challenges. The environment industry is affected by the same kinds of factors that affect most other businesses in the province today. As one example, the worldwide economic crisis is slowing down activity in many of the sectors that invest heavily in environmental products, technologies and services.

Some people would have us believe that a slower economy should cause us to scale back on environmental protections, but our government believes that the opposite is true. Now is exactly the time for strong environmental measures and for the economy to retool itself into a greener economy. As a society, we are beginning to understand that investments in protecting our environment are investments in our future.

Our government believes that the environment industry is an integral part in making the transition to a green and sustainable economy. We are working to ensure that Ontario companies are able to create highly skilled and well-paying jobs in clean and renewable energy sources: energy and water conservation, waste management and the creation of products in ways that don't harm our water, air or land.

That is why our ministry is a strong supporters of Ontario's environment industry. We work with ONEIA in a variety of ways, from co-sponsoring seminars and workshops to providing promotional materials for the industry and working together, particularly on a day like today, which is Environment Industry Day.

We are committed to making Ontario a world leader in the green industry, and we are working to support the environment industry with a broad range of initiatives. These include: our Open for Business strategy, helping to reduce the regulatory burden on Ontario's businesses; our proposed toxics reduction strategy, which would, if passed, allow the investment of some \$24 million over the next three years to support smaller businesses in reducing the toxics that they use in their day-to-day work; and our emerging technologies fund, which recently was announced in our budget and will invest \$250 million over five years to drive startup investment in green technology companies and other high-tech businesses.

The Ontario environment industry has a tremendous long-term potential, and our government is taking action through a wide range of initiatives and ministries to ensure that our environment industry can capitalize on the growing world demand for its products, its services and its expertise.

I want to thank ONEIA and their members for their efforts and all they do to improve the quality of life that we enjoy in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond today to the introduction of the Ticket Speculation Act by the

minister. I can say right upfront that, although we've just seen this legislation, and I think it's only a page long, obviously we look forward to any legislation that will protect consumers, especially at a time when the economy is so difficult in our province and when, if there is gouging of tickets taking place, it does have an impact on people coming into the area and spending money in other areas such as restaurants and hotels and that sort of thing. So that is important.

I do want to say that the one thing about this bill is that when it is a short bill we shouldn't be spending an awful lot of time on clause-by-clause. It's only got about three sections to it. Now, I'm already getting the finger put up to me. Mr. Kormos probably wants to spend a day or two on clause-by-clause on it.

I think all of us have been involved in shows and concerts and stuff. I myself have paid scalper prices for different things. I've never been involved in TicketsNow. That's a fact of life. That happens in the province. If you go outside of a ballgame or a hockey game, you can always find the scalpers there; and now these companies are actually professional scalpers, taking much more. We need to deal with that.

What's really amazing with this whole legislation is that it was actually brought to our attention by an American, Bruce Springsteen. With his concert taking place on Thursday night next week, he realized that Canadians and fans of his were being taken advantage of and wanted to draw attention to it. I'm really pleased that the minister has got out in front on this. When Mr. Springsteen is interviewed next week by the media, he'll be able to say that yes, in Ontario the government's taking action against professional scalping companies.

We look forward to the debate on this. I can't say 100% that we want to support the bill in its entirety right now. I do want to have committee hearings and I want to have our stakeholders come forward and bring positive comments back on the bill. I look forward to those committee hearings and to the clause-by-clause as well.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to recognize the Ontario Environment Industry Association, to recognize the vital work that these companies do. We know the government likes to talk about cleaning up the environment and living up to essential environmental standards, but it's the men and women who work within these companies who actually do the heavy lifting. There are about 60,000 of them. They are represented through 2,700 firms across the province.

Given the economic freefall that government inaction has now dragged us into, it's well past time that Ontario recognized the potential of our environmental industries—and when I say “recognize,” I do say through actions, not just through some empty words. I know at estimates they put the growing world environmental market at almost \$700 billion annually.

Now, we've heard that ONEIA hired Deloitte Consulting to do a study on potential opportunities within this

industry and also to identify some of the hurdles in this province that prevent these companies from reaching that potential.

1530

Last year, when I responded to a similar statement from the minister, I indicated a need for a real partnership with the Ontario government to cut through the unnecessary regulatory red tape and to unplug that log jam for project approvals, which prevent many of these companies from moving forward on the kind of work that they wish to accomplish. One year later, the Deloitte study suggests that not much has changed.

The report goes on to highlight continued concerns that Ontario will not be able to capitalize unless business and government work together, and that that also requires the appropriate incentives, and it requires focused public policy and focused regulation. These companies are often at a competitive disadvantage with respect to the regulations that are put upon them. They indicate that in Ontario, it takes one-and-a-half times as long—even longer—to get approvals to proceed forward with project development compared to other jurisdictions.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Kormos: Look, I don't dislike the Attorney General, but this bill today is bullocks—pure, unadulterated bullocks. The Attorney General doesn't understand the problem, and he certainly doesn't understand the solution. We've got a Ticket Speculation Act in this province that's been in existence for decades and generations; it's a simple matter of enforcing it. Good Lord Jesus, Speaker.

The legislation that exists makes it illegal to resell a ticket for more than the original purchase price, for more than the face value. It's perfectly legal to sell a ticket for less than face value, which is why I can't even understand why my Conservative colleague wouldn't wait until the first inning has started before he buys his ticket. He can get good seats at half the price. I rely upon those scalpers outside of SkyDome to get \$80 seats for \$25. The legislation presented today doesn't even forbid selling tickets for below the face value. This is not going to end the gouging and the rip-offs. It's not going to protect consumers from exorbitant markups by scalpers. What we need is to ensure the enforcement of the Ticket Speculation Act.

Look, most consumers want to have a service that will purchase tickets for them and provide them to them. Most consumers don't want to line up at midnight and wait until the box office opens the next morning at 10. Most consumers are more than prepared to pay a reasonable commission, a reasonable fee, for a reseller to obtain that ticket for them.

What this legislation should be is a range or a set of commission caps. I'd suggest that a cap of 5% to 6% of the face value of a ticket should be allowed. That would be a reasonable markup for the reseller and it would protect the consumer. But if the cops in Ontario aren't going

to protect people against scalpers hanging out outside Air Canada Centres and SkyDomes and Lord knows how many rock-and-roll venues, why would they bother concerning themselves with the amendments to this legislation?

The Attorney General has missed the mark. As I say, from a person for whom I have affection, I find that horribly, horribly disappointing. I, for the life of me, can't believe that it wasn't Harinder Takhar who wrote this bill and who made the Attorney General present it for first reading.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Remember, we don't refer to members' names.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's never an easy act to follow.

Along with my colleagues, I welcome the Ontario Environment Industry Association to Queen's Park today.

I listened to the comments of the Minister of the Environment talking about the need for job creation, talking about the time for strong environmental measures to make sure there's the market there for green products. So I would urge the minister to take the opportunity to act to make the Green Energy Act a much stronger piece of legislation than it is.

Right now, the Ontario Power Authority is not planning to take advantage of all the cost-effective efficiency and conservation opportunities that are out there in the wider world. The Minister of the Environment could be pressing his colleagues to make sure that those opportunities are taken advantage of, so that people get put to work.

This government could have levelled the playing field between those who work in the nuclear industry, providing power from generating stations that have historically gone way over budget—he could have levelled the playing field or his government could have levelled the playing field to make sure that nuclear power does not have the benefit of being able to overrun without penalty, while renewable power has to operate within fixed prices.

His government could have indicated that they would be doing everything possible to eliminate the market for nuclear power by ramping up and accelerating the development of renewable power in this province. Interestingly, the Ontario Power Authority just came forward with a study finding that wind, sun, biomass and water power could provide up to half of the province's electricity supply over the next few years. Deal with the other half through efficiency and conservation, and there's no need for us to stay stuck in the nuclear age; we can go past it.

This minister is in a position, with the Toxics Reduction Act, to put in place tough measures to actually create the market for green chemicals, for green chemical products, by accelerating the moving away from toxic chemicals. He's got an opportunity to do that as we go through debate on this bill, through clause-by-clause.

If in fact this minister wants to help the Ontario Environmental Industry Association, he can bring in much tougher environmental regulations.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have petitions signed by thousands of Cambridge residents supporting their hospital, and many of those persons were on the front lawn of the Legislature today. The petition reads:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth, and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

"Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

"(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital."

As I support this petition, I affix my name thereto and give it to Cameron.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Kim Craitor: I am pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of the good people of my riding from Fort Erie, who also were up here today at Queen's Park expressing their concerns about health care. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the residents of the town of Fort Erie:

"Whereas the Niagara Health System (NHS) under the direction of the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) has been instructed to implement the hospital improvement plan (HIP); and further,

"Whereas the HIP will seriously reduce and eliminate much-needed services to our small rural hospital; and, further,

"Whereas the LHIN is accountable to the provincial government for funding and legislative functions; and, further,

"Whereas the NHS is accountable to the LHINs through accountability agreements;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We object to the recommendations in the HIP that will reduce services to the Douglas Memorial Hospital and demand that the NHS, through direction from the LHINs, continue to provide the current level of services at the Douglas Memorial Hospital to the residents of Fort Erie."

There are 14,000 signatures, and I'm pleased to sign this petition.

MULTIPLE MYELOMA

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here signed by hundreds and hundreds of people in my riding and beyond.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, an incurable form of cancer; and

"Whereas Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Ontario for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells; and

"Whereas multiple myeloma is treatable with the proper therapies, thereby giving hope to the 2,000 Canadians diagnosed annually;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Cameron.

1540

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from citizens in the riding of Peterborough supporting Bill 149.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Kenzie.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions to do with the Burk's Falls health centre. We had a busload of people down from Burk's Falls today, including community leaders. It reads: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Burk's Falls ... health centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk's Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

"Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

"Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk's Falls health centre;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk's Falls health centre."

I support this petition.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce this petition from the good people from Niagara Falls. I want to thank Councillor Carolyn Ioannoni, Jock Ainsley, Joe Longo and many others for gathering 9,000 signatures on these petitions. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, on July 16, 2008, the Niagara Health System (NHS), which oversees governance and management of all acute care hospitals in the Niagara region, released its hospital improvement plan (the plan); and

"Whereas the plan was ordered by the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant (HNHB) Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) because of the inability of the NHS to balance its budget; and

"Whereas the plan purports to consolidate services into centres of excellence, but by doing so eliminates essential services that residents expect at their various local hospitals throughout the region; and

"Whereas the centres-of-excellence concept fails to recognize the lack of regional transportation, leaving the disadvantaged with an inability to get the essential services they may desperately need; and

"Whereas, although the centres-of-excellence concept may consolidate NHS services, it will create the need for increased transportation infrastructure that will inevitably need to be funded by the taxpayers; and

"Whereas, under the plan, many essential services will be concentrated at the proposed new hospital in the west end of St. Catharines. The proposed new complex was

specifically chosen as a site for the new St. Catharines-Thorold hospital, not for a regional hospital. Despite the fact that many essential services will be located at the new complex, it is not centrally located to service the needs of the residents of the Niagara region;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to personally review the hospital improvement plan of the Niagara health system; order the NHS to halt any action on the new hospital complex in St. Catharines, the implementation of the hospital improvement plan, and hold appropriate public consultations; ensure the maintenance of essential services, such as maternity wards and 24-hour emergency rooms, at local hospitals; and

"Ensure that if there is a centralization of services, the new hospital that will house the centre of excellence will be located in a more centralized location in the Niagara region."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have a petition here signed by several hundred people, and more are coming in daily.

"Whereas St. Mary's hospital, Grand River hospital and Cambridge Memorial Hospital in the Waterloo region are experiencing a substantial increase in demand due to population growth; and

"Whereas hospitals in the Waterloo region receive \$279 less per resident compared to other Ontarians; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's policies have contributed to nursing cuts and to other staff cuts, bed closures and the closure of outpatient clinics, all of which reduce the quality of care; and

"Whereas the provincial government has secured significant additional health care funding from the federal government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government provide our hospitals with their fair share of provincial funding and introduce a funding formula based on demographics and the health needs of the population."

I'm very pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for ... particulate matter (PM2.5); and ...

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

"Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of" particulate matter "PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed ... area; and ...

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I'll sign the petition and provide it to Lindsay.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with the new McGuinty sales tax. It reads:

"Harmonizing PST and GST

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is planning to merge the 8% provincial sales tax and the 5% federal sales tax; and

"Whereas the new 13% harmonized sales tax will be applied to products not previously subject to provincial sales tax such as gasoline, home heating fuels, home renovations, haircuts, hamburgers, television service, Internet service, telephone and cell services, taxi fees, bus, train and airplane tickets, and dry cleaning services; and

"Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by the harmonized sales tax, as will seniors and families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government should remove this harmonized sales tax from its 2009-10 budget."

SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

"Whereas the Ottawa Catholic School Board's capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions for school boards which are not in debt, where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board's education development charges bylaw;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic School Board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans."

I agree with this petition, will sign my name thereto and send it down with Alexis.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have a petition signed by many hundreds of people.

"Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs;

"Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect;

"Whereas the McGuinty ... government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide \$6,000 in personal care, per resident;

"Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario's ability to meet the demands of our aging population;

"Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for a LTC bed;

"Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick;

"Whereas dedicated long-term-care homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require;

"Whereas devoted long-term-care staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations;

"Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in LTC beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

"—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

"—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario's 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

"—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care, per day, within a year;

"—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

"—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce LTC wait lists of more than 24,000 people; and

"—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of LTC homes."

I'm very pleased to affix my signature.

1550

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got thousands of people here in support of our caregivers. This is from Faye Arellano at the community hub at Assumption Church in Toronto, and Father Ben and Sister Haydee.

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers" and caregivers; and

"Whereas foreign workers" and caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

"Whereas" the Ontario government of Mike Harris "deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law" in the province of Ontario.

I support the caregivers, Sister Haydee and the people at Assumption Church, and I affix my name to the petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I move the following motion:

Whereas the McGuinty government has no plan to address hospital deficits and protect patient services; and

Whereas the health policies of the McGuinty government are responsible for the elimination of outpatient services, bed closures, the layoff of hospital staff such as nurses and the potential loss of hospital services and emergency rooms in communities such as Ottawa, Cornwall, Belleville, Kingston, Kitchener, Cambridge, Guelph, Hamilton, Burlington, Fort Erie, Welland, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Simcoe, Alliston, Strathroy, Petrolia, Wallaceburg, Chatham, Sudbury, Burk's Falls, Pickering, Ajax, Oshawa and Toronto; and

Whereas these decisions are being made unilaterally by local health integration networks (LHINs) without full consultation and consideration of the concerns of the residents in these affected communities;

The Legislative Assembly calls on the McGuinty government to acknowledge the needs of Ontario's growing communities and our aging population and develop a plan to address growing hospital volumes, protect patient services, prevent nurses from being fired and address growing hospital deficits.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Witmer has moved opposition day number 3. Mrs. Witmer?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Today is the second time in the past two months that we've had a demonstration on the front lawn of Queen's Park. On March 5, we had nurses here from throughout the province of Ontario who

came because they were very concerned that the policies of the McGuinty Liberal government were resulting in the disappearance of nursing jobs and the firing of nurses from workplaces throughout the province of Ontario, including and particularly, our hospitals. They were concerned that as nurses were disappearing and other nurses were being forced to assume the extra workload, the quality of health care being provided to patients was obviously compromised. They were also very concerned that we were putting the health and safety of patients at risk.

That demonstration, which was based on the fact that this government's policies were reducing their number and leading to the firing of nurses, was followed up today. Today, outside on the lawn, we had several thousand people who had gathered here from communities throughout the province of Ontario—I named many of the communities that were gathered here today in our opposition day motion. They came from all parts of this province. They had hired buses, and they were prepared to personally tell this government to stop the cuts to the hospitals. In fact, they were also here to tell this government to stop the closure of our emergency rooms; to stop, in some instances, the fact that you're closing our hospitals altogether. This is a serious issue.

In 2003 Premier McGuinty promised that he was going to unclog the emergency rooms, that there would be a revolution in long-term care and that we'd see the building of more beds for our seniors. He also at that time indicated that he was going to protect patient services and improve access to care. Well, since 2003 we have seen exactly the opposite. The long-term-care beds for the more than 25,000 people who need them have not been built. Instead, those people wait on waiting lists. Some of them languish in hospitals; in fact, 20% of the beds in hospitals today are occupied by what we call alternative-level-of-care patients.

The other thing that the Premier and this government did was they set up what are called local health integration networks, LHINs. I can tell you that people in this province are very concerned about the unilateral actions that are being taken by LHINs throughout this province. There are 14 of them. The people on the LHIN boards have been appointed by the government, and they are now 14 more bureaucracies, dictating what health services are going to be available to people in local communities. However, the decisions that they are making come as a shock to the people in that community, who have not been consulted.

Nobody knows the criteria under which they make these decisions, because this government, since 2003, although they promised a plan, although they promised a strategy—in fact the past minister, Mr. Smitherman, in 2006 and 2007 promised a plan. We have never seen a plan. So it leads one to wonder: Is the plan to cut services? Is the plan to close hospitals? Is the plan to cut emergency rooms? We know there is a plan, but the plan has never been publicized. Instead the LHINs, at the beck and call, obviously, of the government, are making

decisions that are having a very detrimental impact on the lives of people in the province of Ontario.

This is what's happened in communities throughout this province; St. Mary's General Hospital, for example, in my community: They've closed beds, they've closed outpatient clinics—osteoporosis, a medical day clinic for rheumatoid arthritis patients and a physiotherapy program—and they've eliminated 17 full-time jobs to balance the books. In Norfolk, they've cut staff. They've ended the outpatient nutritional counselling service and the cardiac club. At Headwaters they've closed the outpatient physiotherapy program, outpatient heart function clinic and the Shelburne outpatient physician clinic. At Guelph, they've eliminated the asthma education clinic and they're operating with only one mammography machine instead of two. Thunder Bay announced that it's closing its after-hours diagnostic imaging services and saying to people, "Go to the for-profit company instead." In Ottawa, we've seen cuts of staff in significant ways, and cuts in diagnostic and clinical areas as well.

The list goes on and on. In ridings and hospitals throughout Ontario, this government is putting the health and safety of people in our communities at risk. The LHINs are making decisions based on absolutely no criteria that have been made public. They're doing it in a stealthful manner—and we had people here today from Port Colborne and Fort Erie who are learning that their hospitals are closing. They're going to have to drive to St. Catharines or to Niagara Falls. We had the Wallaceburg people here today; they are hearing that their hospital's closing. The list goes on and on. Every day, every week, every month, we hear about more hospitals that are going to be forced to fire staff, including nurses, to reduce services and to close wings of their hospitals.

1600

This Premier and this minister today refused to acknowledge the concerns of the several thousand people who gathered out here on the lawn of Queen's Park. They deserve to be heard, and the Liberal MPPs are not responding. Many of them have been faced by demonstrations in their own communities in front of their own riding offices. Today, these people were here because for six years, this government has not listened. They are saying to you, "We call upon you to acknowledge the needs of our communities, the fact that our population is aging, and we ask you to develop a plan and make the plan public, not do it stealthily through the LHINs, to address the growing hospital volumes, to protect patient services, to prevent our nurses from being fired and to address our growing hospital deficits."

I wonder if the MPPs on the government benches are prepared to stand up today and support our opposition day motion. They should if they're going to be responsive to their constituents, because their constituents were here today. I can tell you that we're already hearing from the newspapers and media in those communities, wondering whether or not their local MPP is going to be responsive to the needs of the local community. I urge them to stand up and be counted today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to be talking today about the PC motion that has already been read in this House this afternoon. New Democrats have many, many concerns about Ontario's health care system, and a lot of them have been included in this motion. Some of these concerns were brought to the steps of Queen's Park today from communities across the province. The individuals and the communities they represent are worried about the fate of their hospitals, they're worried about access to their hospital services and they're worried about the fate of their small communities if those services are no longer available in their communities.

Today, we had people coming on the front lawn of the Legislative Assembly from Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Petrolia, Tillsonburg, Hamilton, Welland, Sarnia, Belleville, Picton, Trenton, Cambridge, Leamington, Wallaceburg, Sudbury, Toronto, Windsor—and the list goes on. They came today because the hospital in their community is facing service reduction, staff cuts and loss of care.

They also came because they live in a city that is destined to receive these newly orphaned patients and can now expect even more taxed emergency departments in their own regional hospital. Or they came because they wanted to fight to make sure that our publicly funded medicare system remains stable and responsive to the needs of Ontario communities.

The fear and concern out there in this province is widespread. Ontarians, particularly those of us who live in rural, smaller or northern communities, have had a lot of bad news recently. We have been hearing about a lot of potential service reductions, about cuts to staffing and ultimately cuts to the care that is available to us. We fear for the quality of care and the ability of our health care facilities to do the job they were intended to carry out for us. In places like Fort Erie, Burk's Falls, Wallaceburg, St. Joseph Island—and there are quite a few more to this list—they've lost access to birthing services, to mental health services, to acute care beds and even to emergency rooms. That could all be a thing of the past for the people who access the services in those little communities. In communities like Fort Erie, they fear that their emergency room will be closed, leaving residents to scramble to another city for care—basically, when they need it the most. The fact of the matter is, this government has shown zero leadership when it comes to the issues affecting small, rural and northern hospitals.

This morning in question period, I asked the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to explain the role of small and rural hospitals to me—a simple, direct question. He was not able to give me an answer. That left me really concerned. Instead, rather than explaining the role of small and rural hospitals, he went on and dismissed the thousands of people who were protesting here today, saying, "Oh, it was just the unions and their supporters." Well, the last time I checked, people have the right to organize and the right to remain residents of Ontario. They are still people of Ontario, but even this

put aside, those people came all the way to Toronto to express their fear for their community, their fear for the care of their families. If the minister had gone outside to actually talk to the people who came, to the people who wanted to be heard, he would have seen that those on the lawn today were not just unions and their supporters. Actually, they were individuals from small, rural, northern communities who decided to get together so that their voices could be heard.

I went around and talked to as many people as I could. A lot of the participants told me they had never taken part in a protest before, but they felt that they could not be heard in their own community. But they still had something to say and they wanted the Minister of Health to hear them. The minister really should be ashamed for his dismissive and inappropriate comments toward the good people of smaller rural and northern communities, who, frankly, deserve to be heard. They have something to say.

We know that hospitals in smaller rural and northern communities experience totally different challenges in terms of funding, in terms of recruitment and retention of staff, than do hospitals and other service agencies in large urban centres. But this government has repeatedly ignored these differences; they have ignored the concerns of the residents of these communities.

Just yesterday, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care finally announced some action on rural and small hospitals. In the Chatham Daily News yesterday there was an article about this. It reads:

"Health Minister David Caplan responded that the government is committed to examine the issues and providing a framework to support rural communities.

"The first step he said is establishing the northern and rural health care advisory panel."

The article goes on to say that the honourable MPP Pat Hoy said, "I'm hearing from my constituents that a number of hospitals across the province are facing budgetary pressures this year"—read deficit. "This is a significant concern to my community which relies on our hospitals to provide quality care and services."

I would say that it is no surprise to anyone in this House that the issue of hospital pressure and looming cuts is affecting all of our constituencies, but why has it taken this government so long to come up with any kind of a response is a question that, I guess, begs to be answered.

What is most shocking is the reality that the McGuinty government was involved in an extensive study that focused on small rural hospitals. There were actually three studies, all done by the multi-site/small hospitals advisory group of the JPPC of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The first one of those reports came out on June 1, 2006: *The Core Service Role of Small Hospitals in Ontario—Phase One: An Exploration of the Current Services*. This report has 73 pages, and it's basically the mapping of what is going on in small rural hospitals in Ontario.

1610

It was followed on October 18 by a 22-page report by the same group called *The Core Service Role of Small Hospitals in Ontario—Phase Two: Recommended Core Services*, which basically describes what mandated services should be for all of the small and rural hospitals in Ontario.

But that's not all. This was a group of busy beavers, and they worked really hard. They came out with a third and last report, called *The Core Service Role of Small Hospitals in Ontario—Phase Three: The Future*, in which they make recommendations as to the future of smaller rural hospitals in Ontario.

Although those reports were prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, I'm kind of wondering if anything has been done with them, to the point where I'm wondering if anybody has read them. Why would we be back at the drawing board again? Was the time that those good people took to write those reports wasted?

But if we must study again—it is their decision; I guess I haven't got much of a say in this—at least put a moratorium on service reductions and the closure of small rural hospitals. They said that the committee would report this fall. It is not a long time. Put a moratorium on that. If you want one more study, go ahead with your one more study. But if small and rural hospitals let go of their staff, if they cut services, if they continue to live with this uncertainty about their future, we will have set them up to fail. They will be in a position where they won't be able to recruit and retain a stable workforce. As staff leave them and they are not able to recruit, they won't be able to continue with the services they are presently offering.

Let the ministry be clear: If you really want a solution for the small and rural hospitals, if you really want to study them again, do it in a fair way. Don't set the hospitals up to fail, and then come up with one more report which will join the other three that I've already talked about and collect dust someplace.

New Democrats are increasingly concerned about the health and hospital services available to Ontarians in small and rural and northern communities. The opposition day statement makes reference to a large number of issues, issues that impact across the entire health care system. The motion talks about the elimination of outpatient services. This is of great concern to me and to every New Democrat. We have been watching our public medicare services get delisted or removed from the public sector institutions in which they were previously housed. Not only were physiotherapy, chiropractic services and optometry services delisted, but we have also seen what I would call an epidemic of closures of outpatient physio services in hospitals.

As hospitals struggle to balance their budgets, to present a balanced budget without a deficit, they often have to make tough decisions, and one of the decisions that they make is to cut outpatient physiotherapy services, on the premise that community-based physiotherapy services are available.

There are many problems with that, the first being that because physiotherapy is delisted, those physiotherapy clinics are private, for-profit and they're not covered by medicare, which means that people who do need physiotherapy services, if the hospitals no longer offer outpatient physio, are stuck having to pay for those services themselves. The sheer price of it makes it out of reach for a high proportion of Ontarians who do not have insurance and certainly do not have the means to pay for those types of services themselves.

Don't kid yourself, Mr. Speaker. It's not because a service is no longer available that the need for that service goes away. People usually turn towards physiotherapy or chiropractic services because they are in pain. The pain and the suffering will still be there. What won't be there any more is the ability to have somebody help you. Those people will be left to themselves, to be in pain and to suffer. Is this really what we want to do?

The McGuinty government has also stood by as medicare has been blatantly violated by private providers. A report by the Ontario Health Coalition released last October documented a disturbing rise in the number of private clinics operating across Canada, but really the great majority of them are operating right here in Ontario—a lot of them in Toronto and our other large urban centres.

The Ontario Health Coalition report found that these clinics charge steep enrolment and annual fees for medically necessary services. That flies completely in the face of medicare and the Canada Health Act. They are only accessible to a very small number of rich Ontarians, and those private clinics are also double- and triple-billing. They will bill OHIP, they will bill the private insurance, they will bill WSIB and they will bill the user. This is clearly a case of care that is motivated by greed, not by needs.

But the damage does not stop there. This report also found that these private clinics hurt our not-for-profit health care system by poaching the public system of its physicians, nurses, technicians and other health professionals, and leaving the vast majority of Ontarians to face longer wait lists and reduced access to necessary medical procedures, as our health care providers cannot recruit and retain their workforce. Privatization is already wreaking havoc on our health care system.

New Democrats agree with the PC motion that the McGuinty government must acknowledge the needs of Ontario's growing communities and our aging population. We agree that a real plan needs to be put into place to address hospital capacity issues, to preserve patient services and to protect the jobs of our frontline health care workers.

But as we look closely at each these issues, we see the complexity and the interaction between them and between the different players in the health care system. Hospitals, I would say, are a little bit like the canary in the coal mine. That is, they tend to act as the ultimate social safety net. Whenever there is a crack in a part of the health care system, it will be either the hospital emerg or a hospital department that will end up picking up this patient. They are our ultimate safety nets.

When Ontarians have been unable to access the health care services they require, they end up in hospitals, so we must also look at the McGuinty government's failure to provide adequate long-term-care services; to provide support in a comprehensive and robust home care system; and to invest in health promotion, disease prevention and public health. These are just some of the factors which are increasing the burden on our hospitals and making it harder for them to balance their budgets.

New Democrats are truly concerned about the alternate-level-of-care crisis occurring in our hospitals. The reality is that as our population ages, this issue will only get worse. Alternate-level-of-care patients make up about 20% of hospital beds. That is 20% of acute hospital beds that should be available to people who need surgery, hospitalization, medical, etc., are being used to care for people on alternate level of care. The worst thing about this is that those people in the alternate-level-of-care beds are not receiving the care they need. A lot of them could go on to be at home if we had better home care services—and I'll talk a little bit more about this soon.

1620

The solution to the alternate-level-of-care crisis is complex, but New Democrats think that if we would commit to the following, the situation would drastically change. First, we have to commit to home care services that help keep people independent longer. Home care is an economical way of keeping our seniors healthier and reducing the need for more expensive care services. At the end of the day, most people would prefer to stay in their own homes with the support they need.

In spite of the benefits that home care brings to our health care system, the McGuinty government has consistently and repeatedly undermined it. The competitive bidding model in home care has decimated our home care system. It has placed profit ahead of people's needs. So we are left with a home care system that is unable to provide the care that Ontarians require. The home care system is increasingly facing an inability to recruit staff or maintain good relationships with their staff because of chronic underfunding and under-resourcing on the part of the McGuinty government. The home care system needs to be funded in a way that will enable them to recruit and retain a stable workforce, because stability is one of the key pillars of quality care in home care. To have different workers come into your home every day to provide your care does not work; it does not provide quality care. If the agencies providing home care don't have the means and the resources to recruit and retain a stable workforce, then we are forever dealing with a broken system, a system through which lots of people fall through the cracks and end up in our hospitals and often end up filling up those 20% of hospital beds in Ontario that are now holding alternate-level-of-care patients. The long wait list and cancelled visits mean that the home care system is basically performing below what is needed.

Looking at the long-term-care system, we see the same theme. There is no question that we need more spaces in long-term care, but this is only a fraction of the

picture. We must also deal with the quality of care that is provided to each and every one of those 75,000 people in a long-term-care bed. We have been waiting an awfully long time for a minimum standard of care to be legislated in these facilities. A minimum standard of care would ensure that residents receive 3.5 hours of daily hands-on care, and it would set up other standards ensuring quality of life for these residents. Think about it. For somebody who is bedridden, who needs help to get up in the morning, get dressed, get washed, go the bathroom, be fed breakfast, be brought around, fed lunch and the same thing with supper, and then you do it all in reverse at night—shower, change and transfer back to your bed etc., think of doing all of this in 3.5 hours and you will see that you quickly run out of time. A lot of long-term-care facilities only offer 2.2 hours or 2.5 hours. The people working in long-term care are running off their feet. They know that the residents deserve better, but there are simply not enough of them to care for everybody.

We must also address the staffing crisis in those facilities. There is no way around it. In the 2008-09 budget, long-term-care facilities were promised an extra 2,500 personal support workers and an extra 2,000 nurses. Good news was on its way. The government had realized that we needed more staff and more hands-on care for the people in long-term-care facilities, and they were going to get extra staff. However, that was one of the many broken promises. This promise of increased staff have not materialized, and it is the people in long-term-care facilities who suffer.

Finally, many alternate-level-of-care patients are ending up in retirement homes. Retirement homes are not like long-term-care homes. Long-term-care homes are regulated and retirement homes are not. They are not health care facilities. I think the only thing that governs them, actually, is the Landlord and Tenant Act, which falls really, really short on quality of health care. Actually, it does not address it at all. So retirement homes are not obligated to provide health services, and they are not regulated.

New Democrats have been asking for a regulatory framework for these facilities to ensure that residents' needs are met and their safety is protected. New Democrats support strategies that can impact the crisis in alternate-level-of-care patients that are presently in our hospitals, but we believe in innovative and comprehensive reform. We believe that all Ontarians are entitled to live in a setting which provides the care and support they need, rather than simply warehousing people in the institution where they end up being because there is no other option. This is no way to treat people. If we can address the issue of alternate-level-of-care patients, the underlying issue of long-term care, of home care, of retirement homes, we may have an entirely different picture of our hospitals, because although it looks like it is a hospital problem, the solutions to those problems lie outside of the hospital boundaries into the community, the long-term-care field, home care, etc..

Now I want to talk about another point that my colleague had talked about, and this is the LHINs, the local

health integration networks. When the local health integration networks were first put into place, I was ready to give them the benefit of the doubt. I was ready to allow the government some time to work on the kinks in the system and create a real regionalized health care system, a system that would be responsive to the needs of the people who lived within their geographical area. Who best to know the needs of the people but the people who live there and provide the care and receive the care, etc.? In theory, it seems like a good idea.

We wanted a system that was responsive, a system that was transparent, a system that was accountable to the people that it intended to serve, but here we are, three years later, and most of the LHINs have failed to become the responsive, community-based health care body they were intended to be. Instead, we have watched as the McGuinty government has used the LHINs as a smoke-screen through which it can evade responsibility and deflect criticism.

Every time we hear of a possible emergency department closure, every time we have news of a service cut, the McGuinty government points to the LHINs and throws their hands up in the air—"It's the decision of the LHINs." But when there are funding announcements and new programs that are decided by the LHINs, then all the MPPs come out, get their picture taken, and it is because of their good work that the LHINs have put those new programs and services into place. Well, you cannot have it both ways. Either the LHINs make independent decisions, good or bad, and become transparent and accountable, or we see them for what they are: a smokescreen and an opportunity for the government to take the glory when a new service gets expanded or announced, and to hide behind the LHINs when there is a cut or a decrease in services.

When residents have concerns about the absence of public consultation that the LHINs are supposed to carry out, a process that is mandated in LHIN legislation, again the government is complacent, although consultation is at the core of what makes a regional authority work, what would make the local health integration network work.

1630

This government has been allowing for an unaccountable, undemocratic body to carry out the dirty work that they do not want to do. The people on the LHIN boards are not elected; they are appointed by the government. They are handpicked and put there to make sure that when the government gives direction, nobody says no. New Democrats demand an end to this kind of governance. We want a democratic election of the LHIN board members so that people of the community they serve get to elect who will represent them at the LHIN board, who will make the tough decisions and who will make sure that they are heard. The government must no longer hide behind the flawed LHIN system, as it stands now, that they have created.

In the few minutes that I have left, I want to talk about the swine flu and its relationship to hospitals in a framework of pandemic. With now seven confirmed cases of

the swine flu in Ontario and, I take it, close to 20 in Canada, we are all thinking at the back of our minds that this flu may turn into an outbreak, an epidemic or a pandemic. New Democrats are incredibly concerned about the capacity of our hospitals and the possibility for them to have the front-line staffing that they need. We know that many hospitals in Ontario are running close to capacity. We also know that a lot of them are running over capacity. That means that not only are each and every one of the beds in those hospitals filled, but they also have people on stretchers, people waiting in emerg and basically people everywhere outside of hospital rooms because they don't know where to put them.

In an article in yesterday's *Ottawa Citizen*, the chair of the emergency planning committee for Ottawa was quoted as saying, "It's the million-dollar question because hospitals are at the edge in terms of their capacity already." I am extremely concerned about the capacity issue in our hospitals. Experts usually agree that hospitals should stay at about 75% capacity, even as high as 85% capacity, and still be able to provide quality care. Actually, you'll know, Mr. Speaker, that many jurisdictions around the world have this legally enshrined. This allows hospital capacity to deal with a sudden surge and increase in patient load. And for good reason: There could be unexpected illnesses that could happen, an epidemic, a pandemic. Our hospitals should be prepared with extra beds and have sufficient staff on hand to be dealing with those spikes in demand.

In light of the fears brought by the swine flu, you would think that this government would be especially mindful of the need to maintain our small, rural and northern hospitals. If you look at every health unit plan for pandemic planning, you will see that every single hospital in Ontario has a role to play toward pandemic preparation and is part of the plan. What will happen if those hospitals no longer exist? What will happen if the uncertainty that we have created around small and rural hospitals is such that if they lose their staff, they don't have the manpower to come and provide those services if and when a pandemic happens? Not a pretty picture. We need these facilities to care for us, not only in times of great illness but also on a daily basis, places where we can go and get care quickly after something happens to your kids, a place to stabilize patients, maybe in the midst of a heart attack, or before you can send them on to a tertiary care hospital.

New Democrats agree with a lot of the sentiment of this opposition day motion. We agree with the PC caucus that this government needs a plan for small, rural and northern hospitals, a plan that is better than just shutting them down, decreasing their services and letting go of their staff. So New Democrats also call on the McGuinty government to ensure that the local health integration networks fulfill their commitment to a full consultation process, a process that would be transparent and accountable to the people of the region they serve, which is not the case right now. We urge the McGuinty government to address the underlying issues that impact hospital

capacity and patient care. Our communities have waited long enough.

So for the people of the communities of Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Petrolia, Tillsonburg, Hamilton, Welland, Sarnia, Belleville, Picton, Trenton, Cambridge, Leamington, Wallaceburg, Burlington, Ottawa, Ajax, Pickering, Burk's Falls, Sudbury, Windsor and all others, this is an issue that cannot wait. Those people came here today. They had something to say. They know that the services in their rural and northern hospitals are being decimated. They know that it won't be long before we hit the point of no return, the point where it doesn't matter if you close them, because you have dismantled them enough that they cannot be viable anymore. People in rural Ontario need access to care, and that often means having a small community hospital that you can go to. The people who came to the Legislature today understood this. They wanted to be heard and they also want the government to understand that what they had to say will not go unheard. We need action today to protect our hospitals and protect patient care in this province.

Ça me fait plaisir de présenter quelques idées du Nouveau Parti démocratique face aux coupures de services et à la diminution des programmes et des soins qui sont offerts dans les petits hôpitaux ruraux et du nord.

Aujourd'hui à Queen's Park, sur le gazon en face de la porte principale, il y avait des milliers de personnes qui se sont rassemblées, des personnes qui venaient d'une multitude de petites villes rurales de l'Ontario. Ils sont venus ici soit parce que leur hôpital communautaire va être fermé, leur service d'urgence va être fermé, ou d'autres programmes et services essentiels à leur communauté vont être coupés.

Pour eux et pour les néo-démocrates, ceci n'est pas acceptable. Ils ont essayé d'être entendus au travers de leur réseau local d'intégration des services de santé, leur RLISS, mais souvent les consultations qui ont été faites par leur RLISS ne leur ont pas donné la possibilité d'être entendus, ou, s'ils ont eu la possibilité de parler, ils n'ont certainement pas été compris.

Il y en a suffisamment—des milliers d'entre eux—qui sont frustrés de ne pas pouvoir être entendus et qui ont décidé de se joindre ensemble et de venir ici à Queen's Park. Le ministre de la Santé avait la chance d'aller les rencontrer, mais il a décidé de ne pas le faire. Pourtant, ces gens-là, tout ce qu'ils veulent c'est d'être entendus. Ils veulent que le gouvernement comprenne que si tu es un Ontarien ou une Ontarienne qui vit dans une petite communauté, tu es quand même un Ontarien ou une Ontarienne et tu as le droit à l'accès aux services de santé comme tous les autres.

Ils se rendent compte qu'ils n'auront jamais de soins tertiaires dans leur petite communauté. Ce n'est pas ce qu'ils demandent. Ce qu'ils demandent, c'est de l'accès aux soins, c'est un hôpital communautaire qui pourra leur prodiguer les soins de base. Si on doit être transféré dans un hôpital de soins tertiaires, ils sont prêts à accepter ça. Mais de ne rien avoir ? Cela ne les empêchera pas d'être malades, ce qui va faire que ces gens-là devront voyager plus longtemps, et ça, ce n'est pas acceptable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Excuse me? Yes? What?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We go in rotation. Minister of the Environment.

1640

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to speak to today's motion.

I go on the assumption that every member here wants to get the best possible health care for the people in their own community; to me, it's almost a given. But the one thing over the last 14 years—having been here now for 14 years, as have some of the members sitting across from us who were elected as well in 1995—the one thing that I've always been puzzled by is that you can't have it both ways in politics. You cannot say, on the one hand, "We need tax cuts and we're not going to collect the health premium anymore," the \$3 billion to \$4 billion that we collected from the people of Ontario and that caused us some consternation three or four years ago—let's be honest—and also say, "People, we can give you every possible health care you could possibly need on a given day."

That has always bothered me about the Tory position. They have always basically said that we can have it both ways, that we can have the tax cuts that Mike Harris was famous for and that we can also have better services. We live in a real world. If we want good-quality services, whether we're talking about health care or in education, we have to pay for it in one way or another. So I find it somewhat ironic that the Tories would be bringing forward a motion that basically says, "Spend more on health care," at the same time saying to the people of Ontario, "If you had elected us, we wouldn't have implemented the \$3-billion to \$4-billion health premium." I'll just leave it at that. We can make up our own minds. But you cannot have it both ways.

Let's take a look at the record. Since 2003, the hospital funding in this province has increased by 37%. We have gone from something like a \$10.9-billion hospital budget that existed in 2003-04 to \$15.4 billion, a 37% increase.

We've started 40 different hospital capital projects in the province of Ontario since that period of time.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: There's more to be done. I agree, there's more to be done.

Compared to the way it was five years ago, 630,000 more Ontarians have a family doctor now. To a large extent, this is as a result of the family health teams that are out there, where you bring health care professionals together from a number of different areas and have them work as a team with the doctors, the nurses, the physiotherapists, with all of the other various health care individuals. It works better.

We've hired 10,000 more nurses since that time, rather than the 5,000 or 6,000 nurses that were laid off during the Harris years. I know what happened; I was here. The Tory members were here as well during that period of time, and I can't remember them saying anything about it at that point in time.

The amount of money that we're putting into the aging at home strategy is \$1.1 billion more than was the case five years ago.

Those are just some of the facts that I think we should be dealing with here today.

There are 31,000 more people working in hospitals now than there were five years ago. Where do I get that statistic? It is right from Statistics Canada's labour force survey: 31,000 more health care professionals and support people are working in hospitals today, compared to five years ago. Those are federal statistics, not propaganda from the government, as it were.

When I look at my own situation in the Kingston area, we are very fortunate to be designated as one of the five health sciences centres in the province of Ontario. We're very proud about that. But I can remember that the previous government was going to close the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Kingston, a facility that had existed there and provided services to the community for something like 150 years. That government was going to close it down, and they ordered it closed down. Well, thank goodness Mr. McGuinty was elected as Premier of the province in 2003 and we were able to reverse that. That hospital facility right now is primarily a day hospital, but it services something like 300,000 to 400,000 people per year that otherwise, presumably, would have been left without any service at all, or it would have put an even greater stress on the Kingston General Hospital. Right now at the Kingston General Hospital, their base funding went up by \$70 million—from \$175 million back in 2003 to well over \$260 million today—in a matter of five years, an increase of something like 40%.

Now, I hear some ridicule from the opposite side, but I'm dealing with facts here. Should we be investing more? We probably should. We live in an aging society and we should be doing a lot more, but the reality is that right now, of all the money that we spend in the province of Ontario through our provincial government, almost 50% of that money is going to health care already, so I don't know where this is going to end in the long run, but we are making our priorities very clear. That is, rather than having the irresponsible tax cuts that we had during the Harris years, we're going to invest in the people of Ontario through better education and better health care, and that's the reality of the situation.

I would like somebody from the Tory party to get up and really address the one issue that I'm interested in, and that is, how do they intend to provide all the extra services that they're talking about and, at the same time, eliminate the health care premium in the province of Ontario at a cost of some \$4 billion to the coffers of the Ontario government?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: This government is privatizing and dismantling our health care system by attacking hospitals all over Ontario. Thousands of citizens were here today from many communities across our province to oppose Dalton McGuinty's closing by stealth.

Cambridge's expansion of its hospital was ordered in 1998 by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Cambridge, North Dumfries and all of Waterloo region raised the local share of expansion money, as determined by Dalton McGuinty. Notwithstanding this, in 2005, Dalton McGuinty said he would ignore the commission's order and cancel the expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital. The citizens of Cambridge and North Dumfries, together with business leaders and elected representatives, came together and organized a campaign for Cambridge Memorial Hospital. In December 2005, I presented a petition with over 20,000 signatures demanding that Cambridge Memorial Hospital receive funding for remedial work and the long-awaited expansion. Shortly after that time, both the Minister of Health and Dalton McGuinty relented and both announced the project would proceed.

In June 2007, Minister Milloy visited Cambridge Memorial Hospital to announce that "The McGuinty government is pleased to support the Cambridge Memorial Hospital as it moves forward." Two years later, that promise has again been broken, and once again, the people of Cambridge are fighting back. However, this time around the situation is much worse. Not only are we battling for expansion money; we are also seeking the level of operating funding that is required to meet the needs of a growing community in parity with other communities.

Recently, citizens packed the Cambridge Newfoundland Club, where a rally was held in support of the hospital. The message from the people who attended this rally was loud and clear: Give our hospital the funding it needs to serve the 135,000 men, women and children of Cambridge and North Dumfries. I am proud to live in a community where the citizens feel such immense passion for their hospital.

Dalton McGuinty is cutting nurses and services at our hospital and has not given one cent for fast growth. The population of Cambridge has increased by approximately 30,000 people since the Health Services Restructuring Commission ordered an expansion of the Cambridge Memorial Hospital. This hospital is bursting at its seams, and yet this government chooses to ignore the financial needs of this hospital and, for that matter, 80% of the hospitals in Ontario that are facing deficits.

Cambridge needs its hospital. How can Premier McGuinty deny the people of my riding the same level of health services as other communities? Dalton McGuinty, please quit playing politics with the health care of my constituents. Quit firing much-needed nurses, quit privatizing hospital services, and at long last, honour your promise to let our hospital expansion go ahead.

1650

I take an opportunity to recognize—there are so many volunteers who have worked over the last two months

and, in particular, John van der Heyden and Joe Dwyer, who worked with so many volunteers to organize the protests in Cambridge and here at Queen's Park today. It's my pleasure and my honour to be able to represent constituents who care so much about their community and their hospital.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the critic for health for the opposition party because, quite frankly, when it comes to Guelph, she's got her information all wrong.

One of the things that she cited was that there is a mammography machine at Guelph General closing down. That's actually correct, but as with so many opposition criticisms, she didn't tell us the whole story. I'd actually like you to hear what Mike Sharma, who's the director of imaging at Guelph General Hospital, had to say about this. He explained that there were two machines there. One was a loaner from a company. They borrowed a machine when they were making a transition from an old film-based mammography machine to a digital imaging machine; a company had provided them with a loaner. They don't need the loaner any more, so they're sending it back. It's as simple as that. In fact, the director of imaging says that the mammography machine at Guelph General Hospital has doubled the capacity of the current test that it's doing. So this is a total non-issue, and it's just typical of the sort of misinformation that the opposition has been spreading about health care in Guelph.

I would like to sort out some of the correct information. For example, Guelph General Hospital just had a wonderful event last week, when we opened for the first time ever in Guelph a psychiatric emergency ward at Guelph General Hospital. When I first came into office, what I found was that if you had a psychiatric crisis in Guelph, you were taken to the emergency ward at Guelph General, which had no psychiatric staff, and patients were ending up handcuffed to stretchers under police guard because nobody had any capacity to change that. We worked together as a community. We got funding from the Ministry of Health: \$2.1 million for the capital expense of renovating the area at Guelph General Hospital and a guarantee of another \$1 million annually to operate.

We just celebrated this week a brand new renovated space that is providing a totally secure emergency ward for psychiatric patients: four secure examination rooms, two secure meeting rooms, a secure shower, a secure washroom, a secure waiting area, a secure nurses' station—state of the art; a wonderful space. You know what the bonus of this is? That as part of this renovation, we're actually going back and renovating the main part of emerg so that we're getting five extra examination spaces in the main part of the Guelph emergency room, which will help to expedite the service that's happening there.

Do you know what else we've gotten at Guelph General Hospital? For the first time ever we have an MRI

machine in Guelph so people in Guelph can actually get an MRI test in Guelph. We've got a brand new state-of-the-art CT scanner; again, the capacity to move people through CT exams at Guelph General Hospital is way up because we've got up-to-date equipment. More surgeries in a whole bunch of areas, including being designated as the bariatric surgery centre for the whole LHIN—great things are going on.

Now the opposition wants to talk about 30 layoffs at Guelph General Hospital. But do you know what's really going on here? What I would consider a weird collective agreement. If this was the school board sector and you had too many people at one school and you needed them teaching at another school, it's just a transfer; no big deal. It just happens that the collective agreement at Guelph General Hospital says if you're going to move nurses from one department to another, you have to lay them off and then rehire them in the next department. What the opposition wants to tell you is, "We had 30 layoffs at Guelph General Hospital." Technically, that's true. But what they totally neglect to tell you is that 29 of those people got hired back five minutes later, getting transferred to different jobs in the same hospital. So I totally reject this nonsense that they keep spreading about Guelph General Hospital.

We have a great hospital. In fact, what we've been able to do is get additional beds at the complex and continuing care hospital, we have alternate-level-of-care beds that have opened up, and, in Guelph and area, we're getting 288 new long-term-care beds. I tell you, we have made huge investments in Guelph and area in health care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Sarnia.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It is a pleasure for me to be able to rise—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Sarnia—Lambton, that is. I'm sorry; I didn't want to short you.

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's okay. We know where we're from. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to be able to rise in my place today to speak in favour of the motion put forward by the House leader from my party, the member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

What this government is trying to do to rural health care is a travesty. They think they are fooling everyone by having the local health integration networks make the cuts so that the minister doesn't have to, but they are fooling no one.

I have stood in this House many times since January and asked about the small-hospital emergency room study that was done in our Erie St. Clair LHIN. The study was conducted by the famous Hay Group and it caused quite an uproar in my community. What the Hay Group recommended was that the emergency room at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia be downgraded to an urgent-care ward only. Ambulances therefore would not be able to stop there. They made the same recommendation for the Sydenham hospital in Wallaceburg.

As the MPP for Sarnia–Lambton and as someone who has had a lifelong affiliation with CEE hospital—I was born there, in fact; it goes back that far—I was concerned that if this recommendation were adopted by the Erie St. Clair LHIN, it would have devastating consequences for health care services in central Lambton county. Thankfully, I wasn't alone in this concern. Community leaders from all over Sarnia–Lambton immediately went to work on convincing the LHIN to throw out the Hay Group report. The doctors who practise emergency medicine in Petrolia all threatened en masse to resign and leave the community if the LHIN didn't back down.

As MPPs, we have the unique opportunity to present petitions in this House every day. I was honoured that over 16,000 of my constituents in Sarnia–Lambton signed petitions and volunteered to go collect those petitions at arenas, malls, door to door, any public event—even going so far, like I say, as going door to door to collect those petitions. I was overwhelmed by the support of the community for our local hospital.

Now, we were lucky in some ways. We got a reprieve. In the end, the LHIN decided to put off for a time the decision on downgrading our emergency room, for a period of five years. The deal isn't signed yet, but the doctors were pleased and withdrew their resignations, so now at least we have that reprieve.

I wish the same could be said for other rural hospitals around Ontario. I know that in the riding next door to me, the Sydenham hospital in Wallaceburg was not granted that same reprieve, and that is why so many people were here today at this rally at Queen's Park from the Chatham–Kent area and also from Sarnia–Lambton and other ridings across the province. They were here today to make sure that their voices were heard, that the government did hear from them that there were concerns about health care in rural Ontario as well as all of urban Ontario.

On our side of the House, we recognize that the LHIN system needs to be fixed. We've raised those issues numerous times in the House through petitions and questions to the minister and the Premier. Just today, I raised the case of a family in my riding who were told in writing by a hospital in London that they were to seek treatment in their own LHIN. The minister says the system is supposed to be seamless, but I have a letter from that hospital that says quite the opposite.

The LHINs are unelected and unaccountable boards with tremendous power over how health care is delivered. They are all a blend of rural and urban. You can see in all of them that they are trying to centralize health care services in the urban centres at the expense of the rural centres. This is wrong.

1700

Through the CEE emergency room debacle, what I think people were angriest about was that no one had ever voted in the LHIN, yet it was the LHIN that was getting to decide the fate of the CEE emergency room. When a government member was asked about this, the answer was always the same: "We'd love to help, but

that's a decision the LHIN has to make." The buck was passed from elected officials to unelected officials, and it frustrated and angered many of my constituents.

As I said earlier today, the LHINs are a disaster, and I think any government member, in a moment of frankness, would admit the same. Instead of coordinating health care services, they are creating confusion amongst hospitals, with fatal consequence to patients. This government either needs to fix the LHINs or scrap them altogether.

With Ontario's population aging, our hospitals are going to become even more important than they are today. Instead of trying to hollow out rural hospitals, they should be investing in them so that doctors are encouraged to go and practise rural medicine.

This government has no plan what it comes to rural health care. Yesterday, it quickly announced a haphazard review of rural health care needs. Why the government didn't do that before it told the LHINs to make cuts is beyond me, but I hope that the government will now put a moratorium on making any changes at rural hospitals, at least until it reviews its own report.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments on this opposition day motion. The Chatham–Kent Health Alliance is within my riding, and it also has a hospital in the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex's riding. I want the House to know that last October the Chatham–Kent Health Alliance was picked as one of Canada's top 100 employers. In all of Canada, that alliance was picked as one of Canada's top 100 employers. In order to make the grade, so to speak, I would think that you'd have to have a top-notch hospital facility, one that would have the equipment that's needed, great morale, lots of doctors, lots of nurses and a fine administrative staff as well. I think that's proof right there that things are going quite well within the Chatham–Kent Health Alliance.

Some years ago the Conservative government had a group going around the province, the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and they came to Chatham and put two hospitals together. There was some concern over that at the time, but I do give them a little bit of credit. They put a room into the hospital with nothing in it. But we put something there just recently: It's an MRI. It's one of the finest diagnostic machines that one could have in a hospital.

So we have, from our government, provided an MRI to that hospital—some \$800,000 a year of funding. Not only will this provide the patients who require MRI testing something close to home, which is what people want, but it will alleviate the wait times for MRI patients going to either London or Windsor. Not only was it a win for the local community; it was a win for those in Windsor and London that we don't have people from the Chatham–Kent area going to their hospital and taking up space and room.

We've had great success in Chatham–Kent–Essex with our family health teams. We have them in Tilbury,

Chatham and Leamington, and down the road in Harrow there's another one. The point about the family health teams that I want to make, in particular, is regarding the Tilbury one. The Tilbury family health team worked for 12 years to get this facility—12 years. They're a great volunteer group, they stayed together, they knew what they wanted, they knew it was a pioneering effort way back some many, many years ago; but it was our government that funded a wonderful family health team. They're attracting doctors there, and we're getting more doctors into the region because we have an MRI. Doctors want to work with the best of equipment, and the family health team concept is working well.

Other members have given out statistics on what has occurred provincially in terms of health care dollars spent, but, of course, locally we've had a 40% base increase to the funding at the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, a 40% increase to their base funding—plus an extra \$18.5 million in one-time annual funding from 2003 to 2009; a 17.6% increase to Sydenham District Hospital, which is located in Wallaceburg but is part of the new alliance. So we continue to make those funding arrangements, not only for the province but locally as well. Indeed, the Leamington District Memorial Hospital in Essex has received a 20% increase and something over \$3 million in extra funding—I'm rounding the figures; actually, I'm rounding them on the low side rather than the high side.

The Chatham-Kent Health Alliance has had increases, and their total base funding now exceeds \$78 million. The Leamington District Hospital, as I said, had an increase of \$675,000, and now has funding at \$25,927,000. The Sydenham hospital in Wallaceburg has base funding of \$18,107,000 and has also had increases. I'll just take one second or so to mention that the aging-at-home strategy we have announced as a province has been very well accepted in my community. We want to keep those who want to be at home in their homes longer and provide the means so they can do that.

So things are working very well, and people are very appreciative of the efforts of our government in Chatham-Kent and Essex.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a few minutes today to speak to the opposition day motion to do with health care. It's certainly a very appropriate day to be speaking to this motion, as there were thousands of people on the lawn at Queen's Park today, including a busload of citizens and also municipal representatives from the village of Burk's Falls.

I won't have time in the few minutes I have to say all I'd like to, but I'm going to start by focusing on one part of this opposition day motion, and that's the section that says, "Whereas these decisions are being made unilaterally by local health integration networks (LHINs) without full consultation and consideration of the concerns of the residents in these affected communities."

LHINs are a creation of this McGuinty government. They're basically another level of bureaucracy. They

now have offices in the 14 LHINs across the province; they have high-priced staff. The question I would ask the government and the people of Ontario is, where would you like to see our limited tax dollars going in terms of health care? Would you want to see them going to this new bureaucracy, or would you rather see them going to the nurses, doctors and health services we so desperately need?

It just so happens, with the Simcoe Muskoka LHIN, that at the time Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare—that's all the health care on the east side of my riding—was facing a \$1.6-million deficit; guess what the Simcoe Muskoka LHIN was spending on office renovations and furniture? \$1.6 million. If you asked anybody on the street in Parry Sound-Muskoka if they'd rather see the money go to the hospital so it didn't have a deficit and could keep things like the Burk's Falls health centre open, I'm sure they would unanimously say that is where they'd like to see the money going, and not to a new bureaucracy that is not necessarily going to add any value to the system or provide the health care that people want to see.

The Minister of the Environment was talking proudly about the 31,000 new people working in the health system. I suspect most of them must be working for the LHINs, because we still seem to have a lot of problems in our health care, which is why the village of Burk's Falls, in the Almaguin Highlands, had a busload of people coming down today, including significant municipal representation. We had the reeve of Burk's Falls, Cathy Still, who is a paramedic here, along with Bruce Campbell, a councillor from Burk's Falls; Dick Smith, the mayor of Magnetawan, was down today, and Kris Nicholls, a councillor from Magnetawan; Jeff Johnston, mayor of Kearney, was here; Glenn Miller, reeve of Ryerson township, was here. They're all concerned about what is going to happen at the Burk's Falls health centre.

Burk's Falls is governed by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, which runs the hospitals in Huntsville and Bracebridge. They're facing a \$2.3-million deficit, and they have a \$7-million accumulated debt. They've been working at this over a number of years. They've reduced their costs by \$4 million, but things are still getting worse, not better.

1710

Part of the problem, as I addressed in my private member's resolution a few weeks ago, is that 47% of the beds occupied in the hospitals in Parry Sound-Muskoka are alternative-level-of-care patients, people who would better be served in a long-term-care home or with services at home. We've heard members talking about the special services at home; I believe it's called aging at home. Well, you be may be spending the money, but so far it's not having an effect, because the problem of ALC patients is getting worse, not better.

The day I visited Donald Sanderson, CEO of the West Parry Sound Health Centre, in February, the hospital was at 104% and 40% of the beds were ALC patients. How do you run a hospital like that? The percentage of occu-

pancy you should be aiming for is 85%. That allows you to plan for surgery. It allows you to handle the emergencies that come into the emergency department, and it allows you to be able to have a chance at balancing your budget as well.

Now we have a situation in Ontario and the world with the Mexican swine influenza. How do you deal with something like that if your hospitals are full and the government has failed to address this ALC situation? They need to do things, as I suggested in my private member's resolution, like building more long-term-care beds, to have more living-at-home services for our seniors so they can stay in their own home, more assisted-living beds for Ontarians with disabilities so they aren't in long-term-care homes, and more hospice and palliative care beds.

So far, the government has failed to address this, and we have ongoing problems, particularly in the Burk's Falls and Muskoka-East Parry Sound area. That's why we had a busload of concerned citizens down here at Queen's Park. I thank them for coming down and making the government aware of their situation. I hope the government's listening. Many of the people are not your normal protesters. They're seniors, councillors. They're saying, "Is this really going to make a difference?" I simply said to them, "If you don't speak up, you won't be heard at all." Hopefully, this government's going to listen to the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I have the privilege and honour to stand up and speak against the motion brought by the opposition party, for many different reasons.

As you know, when we were elected in 2003, health care was in bad shape. Many hospitals were closed, many nurses were being fired, and people were not finding doctors. After many years, I believe we've put health care back on track. I had the chance and privilege to serve on a committee that travelled the province of Ontario to study the establishment of the LHINs. We listened to many different stakeholders, and we listened to many experts in that field. They found that it's important for our government and the province of Ontario not to centralize everything; the decision was for many different locations and different areas.

This was the idea behind LHINs, because it is most important to ask for local input on how they want their health care to look, how we can implement the health care strategy, and how we can work between the hospitals, community care access centres and the patients. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, we had the privilege—I think you were present a couple of days ago when the South West LHIN came to us here at Queen's Park and listened to our concerns and dialogued with all the members and took their input. I think they're doing an excellent job in terms of facilitating the job, allocating the money, and also making sure all the hospital beds are being utilized well and serving the people of Ontario.

It's important to continue our mission to reform health care and transform health care. There's no doubt about it,

we haven't fixed it yet. We still have a lot ahead of us, and I think it's important to continue work in this regard.

I had the chance to sit on different committees and listen to many people who are experts in this field. I see the Minister of Health's work to reform health care in terms of e-records and many different initiatives coming, hopefully, in the future to reform and transform health care to make sure all the people of Ontario have access to health care.

Also, the investment in health care is tremendous. When we listened to the LHIN three or four days ago when they came to Queen's Park, they told us that many different hospitals—basically all the hospitals in our region balanced their books, except a few were short by \$1 million or less than \$1 million. But he said some of them also have a surplus. I think the LHIN is working on a strategy to have some kind of flexibility in order to allow the hospitals that have a surplus to share their wealth with other hospitals to make sure all the hospitals function very well and are serving the people in the region.

I think it's important to continue to work with our partners in health care in this province because we have limited dollars, we have limited resources. We want to utilize every penny we have. We want to leverage our tax dollars in order to serve bigger numbers of Ontarians. As you know, as everybody knows in this province, many people are getting old and our population is aging. We want to benefit from every penny we spend in health care.

I want to commend the Minister of Health, I want to commend our government for investing in health care, for continuing to reform health care to utilize every penny we have.

I want to tell you a story from my riding of London-Fanshawe. The LHIN did an excellent job by creating transition beds for the long-term-care patients and the seniors before they go to a long-term-care facility or a long-term-care home. What did they do? They created a transitional bed to free the acute bed service for the people who need it badly. I think it's an important step. I think it plays a pivotal role for that transition time for the people who want to move from their home to a long-term-care facility without raising obstacles or using the acute bed, which is already being set up for people with bigger needs than those people.

I'm going to vote against this motion, and I want to congratulate our government and our minister for the great job they do on behalf of all of us in this province in order to make sure our health care is public and accessible for all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this opposition day motion with respect to health care, with respect to my riding and, more specifically, with respect to hospitals. It's really unfortunate—it's disturbing, really—that opposition members and people right across Ontario were forced to rally out in front of

Queen's Park this afternoon. There were several thousand people out there doing their best to hold this government's hand to the fire and to ensure that residents, not only those out front but other residents across the province, are able to access the health care that they pay for.

I saw so many signs out there this afternoon. I don't know whether any of the government members did come out to speak to the people who were assembled; I didn't see any government members out there. One sign that I saw read—

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —I'll direct this to the member from Brant—"Hands off our hospital." Another sign read, "Give us back our health care." There were many, many signs. I took a picture of these signs. There was one sign titled, "Premier McGuinty, your health cuts threaten our health." That's just a smattering of what I read out there in front this afternoon.

Of course, we know the history of Mr. McGuinty promising not to bring in any new taxes and then turning around and implementing the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario. We all know that as the so-called health tax. But the 2,000 people who were out front this afternoon, wanting to talk to cabinet and government members, have pretty well figured out how that's working out for them. Given the fact that government is sticking its hand in their pockets at this time of year, every year, under the auspices of paying for health services, those people outside wanted to know where those services were and why those same services were either under threats of closure or, in some cases, had actually been shut down.

I think of my own riding, for example. In February of this year, Norfolk county learned that beginning April 1 Norfolk General Hospital would have to implement a number of strategies to eliminate an operating deficit of \$1.2-million. That was 2.8% of that hospital's \$42.6-million budget. Regrettably, our local hospital had to look at bed closures, service cuts, including the discontinuation of an outpatient nutritional counselling program, as well as a very popular and long-term program known as the cardiac club, where people would get exercise sometimes in the area high school but primarily down at the fairgrounds in one of the very large buildings. We've also seen staffing reductions at NGH in not only the administrative and support services but also in clinical areas.

1720

I mentioned the cardiac club. Specifically, I wish to read an article from the local paper, the Simcoe Reformer:

"After 24 years of helping area people stay out of hospital—and in some cases stay alive—the Norfolk cardiac club is done, at least for now.

"It is the victim of the economic downturn and government cutbacks....

"If the group can't revive itself, area heart patients will be worse off, research suggests. A recent Toronto study shows that those who have had a major heart attack and

attend" these kinds of cardiac rehabilitation programs "cut their risk of dying from another heart attack by one half."

There was another study done down in Norfolk eight years ago that found "that members of the local club were two and a half times less likely to end up in hospital again with heart problems compared to sufferers who didn't attend" a program like this.

I can tell you that no one's feeling good about the service cuts, the bed cuts and the staff cuts under this McGuinty government watch. People in Norfolk county have long depended on Norfolk General for the world-class health services that they continue to work to provide. But under government and LHIN direction—we've heard a lot about LHINs this afternoon—this has led to bed closures, service cuts and staffing reductions. That's the concern.

As well, over in Haldimand county the concern grows as the rumour mill escalates every day about the potential of the emergency department closure at West Haldimand General Hospital. This comes as a result of a LHIN clinical services review process that has just been initiated. They'll be wrapping up in November. When I think of some of the area hospitals, we're not really too hopeful.

I wrote to the Minister of Health about this on April 9: "Whatever changes or investments are called for in this review process, Haldimand area residents wish to participate in that process. However, they want assurances that the emergency services they, their family and their neighbours depend on will not be going away under LHIN/provincial direction." Of course, the ultimate direction comes from the elected members opposite.

At the moment, the possible ER closure is a rumour. I'm waiting for a response from the Minister of Health. I wrote the letter and faxed the letter that same day. We do need these assurances before we go into this citizen participation process, this consultation process.

People do bear in mind the experience of their Niagara neighbours to the east. In Niagara, which belongs to the same LHIN as Haldimand, two hospitals have some serious problems. Port Colborne and Fort Erie residents were all out front this afternoon. I chatted with these people. They will no longer have the kinds of hospital services that they and their families have paid for and rely on. They were out front at Queen's Park today, and they had signs like "Fort Erie Says 'No.'" Another sign: "Port Colborne Wants Our Hospitals Back." That's a clear message to members opposite. "Don't Feel Left Out; You're Next." That was another sign.

I was at a town hall meeting in Hagersville on April 8 and I can tell you that people down in Hagersville will not be content to work through this LHIN process and play by the LHIN rules, as they did in Niagara, only to face the same inevitable closures in the end.

The minister may try to redirect this anger away from him. People are learning from this Niagara experience. They understand that in a democracy it's elected officials who make the ultimate decisions. The minister has the

final say. We're all waiting for a reply to that letter that I've written. We need the assurance that emergency services will not be impacted at West Haldimand General Hospital.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm very pleased to speak on this motion today, especially because it mentions the great city of Hamilton.

First, let me say that in Hamilton we are very fortunate to have some of the best hospitals and the best health care professionals in the world. I have seen it first-hand, and they are wonderful. Through their good work, our city has become an important hub of innovative medical research and a leader in patient service. As a result, Hamilton has been able to attract some of the most prominent health care professionals throughout the world, and that's something we don't often talk about in this House.

Take, for example, the famous Dr. Salim Yusuf. Dr. Yusuf is one of the world's foremost researchers in cardiovascular diseases and their prevention. He is one of the most cited clinical researchers in the world, and the most cited in Canada. Dr. Yusuf is vice-president of research and chief scientific officer at Hamilton Health Sciences, as well as the director of the Population Health Research Institute and a professor of medicine at McMaster. He could practise anywhere, but he chose Hamilton.

Another great example is Dr. Mark Levine. Dr. Levine is a world leader in breast cancer and blood clot research. His studies and findings have impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, throughout the world. Dr. Levine is the chair and a professor in the department of oncology at McMaster, and the head of cancer research at Hamilton Health Sciences. Like Dr. Yusuf, he is in demand throughout the world, and he also chose Hamilton. Thousands of others have done the same, and I sincerely thank them.

More than 10,000 people work in Hamilton's health care sector. It is the city's largest employer. In fact, it's not only the largest employer, but it has also been recognized as one of the best. Hamilton Health Sciences has been accredited as being one of Canada's top 100 employers for three consecutive years.

As a government, we are responsible for ensuring that Ontario and Hamilton remain competitive jurisdictions in attracting the best health care professionals. If the above examples are any indication of our successes, Hamiltonians and Ontarians should be very proud of what they have accomplished.

However, these successes do not come without hard work and dedication to our health care system. This dedication can be measured in part by the investments we have made in our hospitals. In 2008-09 alone, this government has provided Hamilton hospitals with base funding of over \$1 billion. Put another way, since 2003 this government has increased base funding to Hamilton hospitals by 25.4%.

There are also many examples of other investments in health care in Hamilton, especially on Hamilton Moun-

tain. If you are driving down Upper Sherman and you turn left on Concession Street, you will see two cranes in the air. They're building an additional 400,000 square feet of new construction and 25,000 square feet of renovated space at the Henderson hospital. It was a privilege to be a part of the topping-off event that took place on April 16. I can tell you that construction is on time and on budget.

Another investment in Hamilton is through the nursing graduate guarantee program. Alone, Hamilton hospitals have hired almost 300 nurses. We've also got 700 more long-term-care beds in Hamilton. You can take a look at the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice as another investment. You will see the real progress we have been making.

It is a pleasure to talk about the investments made in my community of Hamilton, and I will not be supporting this opposition motion.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today in support of the PC caucus opposition day motion, which is about the state of our health care in the province of Ontario, to talk about the sorry record of this government in health care. The minister referred to an infrastructure renaissance that is occurring in Ontario. Well, I see bogeys, not Botticellis. The government created the mess we are in right now. In fact, we have heard from members from the government side—we have heard from Kingston, from Guelph, from Chatham-Kent-Essex and from Hamilton Mountain—about the billions of dollars that the government is spending in their community hospitals. Isn't it peculiar that we have nobody over here to boast about money that's being spent in our ridings? If you'd address the shortfalls in your long-term-care program, we would not have patients that rightfully belong in a long-term-care facility—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Let the member have the floor and have your attention, or take your conversations outside, please. Member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Our elderly citizens deserve specialized care, and our hospitals need a fluid inventory in order to do what they are expected to do for Ontario taxpayers. Fortunately for you, Minister, the LHINs you created shield you from criticism for the most part, but your armour is chipping. The Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN decision-making process is currently being reviewed by the Ombudsman of Ontario. The process is not transparent and it is not inclusive of the community. The reason for this review is because their decision-making process is suspected to be flawed. As soon as the Ombudsman went public with his decision to investigate, shovels started flying on the hospital projects in Liberal ridings. Why? Because it will be discovered, perhaps after it's too late to stop, that the restructuring is wrong-headed. The new approach is not about patients first; it seems to be about turning well-used community

ERs into Band-Aid dispensaries or closing some hospitals altogether. It's about telling pregnant women in rural Ontario that they won't be able to give birth in their local hospitals anymore. Well, I sure hope that the CAA technicians get certified in labour and delivery, because we're about to have a lot of highway births.

The people who travelled from across Ontario today to protest on the front lawn of this Legislature were here precisely because of this Liberal government's wrong-headed approach to health care. Yet during question period today, Minister Caplan clearly stated that he did not agree with these Ontarians. Well, did he meet with any of them? Did he ask them what their vision was for service and delivery of health care in their communities? No, I didn't see him out there. After all, that's why the LHINs were created. They were created to bring the local perspective to the minister's decisions, but the minister doesn't get involved. If your process is working so well, you would not have had the protests on the front lawn today. The Ombudsman would not be breathing down the minister's neck with the LHINs. So bravo on a job well done.

In Burlington, which is part of the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN, whose name, Burlington, has been conveniently not been included or identified, our hospital needs upgrades. In fact, the minister himself admits to it. There is an aging hospital infrastructure across Ontario that needs attention now more than ever. We need to ensure that our hospitals have the tools and the capabilities to handle whatever infectious diseases come our way. As our world continues to shrink in terms of global travel and the spread of unknown viruses and diseases, we need to be ready for whatever comes our way.

During the C. diff outbreak at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, the ministry did less than nothing to help the Burlington community hospital deal with this situation. Perhaps it's because the minister still hadn't read the report from the coroner in Sault Ste. Marie that talked about the contributing factors to that outbreak. If the minister had done his job, perhaps we could have avoided the JBMH outbreak and we could have perhaps helped a hospital with aging infrastructure.

When the C. diff outbreak occurred, it was the Liberal government that was first in the lifeboats. It has not gone unnoticed in Burlington. It has not gone unnoticed in Ontario. I don't plan to stand idly by while you turn our ERs into your stitch-em-up and drive-through service. I want to ensure that our seniors who fought for and paid for this health care system have the right to be treated with dignity inside its doors. We are putting our new mothers and babies at risk when they are forced to give birth on their way to a hospital in another community. Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital deserves to have the necessary infectious disease control measures at their disposal to take care of a community—a community that has given over \$600 million in the health tax that this government imposed almost six years ago.

Finally, I invite the minister with me on a tour of Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. I will be there on May

14. I would love for him to be a guest to see first-hand what our hospital is challenged with.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak against this motion.

One of the great privileges we have in this Legislature is to serve our constituents and particularly to provide them with quality public health care. And since 2003, this government has done exactly so, reversing the cuts of millions and millions of dollars which the previous government brought to the health care system in this province.

Let me just give you a snapshot of what's going on in Ottawa today. I'll give you numbers. From 2003 to 2009, up to today, the funding for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario has gone up by over \$20 million; that's 21.6%. The funding for the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, has gone up by over \$36 million, an increase of 50.7% since 2003. Hôpital Montfort, in that great city of ours, which the Conservatives almost closed, the only French teaching hospital—funding has gone up by over \$38 million. Bruyère Continuing Care, another great hospital in my riding of Ottawa Centre—funding has gone up by \$15 million. Queensway Carleton Hospital—funding has gone up by over \$38 million. Royal Ottawa Hospital, a great hospital in my riding of Ottawa Centre—funding has gone up by over \$20 million, by 64.9%. And the Ottawa hospital, the largest hospital in eastern Ontario—funding has gone up by \$172 million—36.4%.

This is in contrast to cuts which the previous government made. In fact, they closed two hospitals in Ottawa, the Grace Hospital, which was a fine hospital in my community of Ottawa Centre, and the Riverside Hospital.

There are 160 new full-time nurses in Ottawa. Talk about community health centres—which have been very important to me, as I sat on the board of the Centretown Community Health Centre. In Ottawa the funding for community health centres has gone up by \$4.3 million since 2003. The Centretown Community Health Centre and the Somerset West Community Health Centre in Ottawa Centre—their base funding has increased by over \$1.5 million since 2003.

I wish I had more time to talk about it because the achievements in Ottawa alone are tremendous. Most recently, I had an opportunity to meet with Dr. Rob Cushman, the CEO of the Champlain LHIN, and Dr. Jack Kitts, who is the CEO of the Ottawa Hospital, and they both assured me we should be very proud of the kinds of great quality care we have brought to Ottawa because of the investments this McGuinty government has been making in Ottawa since 2003. Therefore, I will be voting against this motion. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

1740

Mr. Bill Mauro: I've had an opportunity to read this motion today, and I do understand that what we're

dealing with today is a very serious issue, but I have to tell you that when I read the motion, it did make me smile a little bit, even though it is a very, very serious issue.

When I read it, it reminded me of an old friend I had in high school—and we all had a person like this, I think. His name was John Holbik, and John was that person we all had in high school who made everybody laugh all the time. Johnny lived about 60 miles west of Thunder Bay. We called him “the Kashabowie Kid”—he was from a little town named Kashabowie. He’d come in from the rural community and he’d billet in Thunder Bay all week and then he’d go home on the weekends. He could make you laugh from sunup to sundown. One of John’s favourite colloquialisms was that he used to say, “Billy, he’s got more nerve than a bad tooth.” When I read this motion here today, I have to wonder who wrote this and how they had the nerve to put it forward.

I don’t have a lot of time. They’re not giving me a lot of time, but I do want to talk to a couple of pieces here, especially this part on local health integration networks. I want to speak to that. They’re saying here that they can’t believe that these decisions have been made unilaterally by the LHINs “without full consultation and consideration of the concerns of the residents” of the “affected communities.” Do you know what they’re implying? They’re implying that before the LHINs, when the base of power was with the Ministry of Health in downtown Toronto, they had the concerns and the considerations of the people of communities like Thunder Bay and Kashabowie and Kenora at heart. That’s what they’re suggesting here when they talk about the LHINs not going forward with full consultation.

I see this piece about “prevent nurses from being fired.” Are they serious that they’re actually going to put that in their opposition day motion? This is the party that fired 6,000 nurses. I don’t know how much money it cost when you went to hire them back. You spent money to fire them and then you spent money to hire them back. It is unbelievable, also coming from a party that’s prepared to cancel the premium and take \$3 billion out of health care, that this is what they bring forward as an opposition day motion; quite incredible.

I could speak for quite a while today listing the improvements that have occurred in health care in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and go on for quite some time, but I do know that my good friend here from Peterborough has some thoughts that he’d like to add to this as well, so I will yield the floor to the member from Peterborough.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I only have 30 seconds, but I want to tell a story. I remember when the Sinclair commission came through Peterborough. If you want to talk about a transparent, accountable institution, I’ll tell you about the Sinclair commission. We had two great hospitals in Peterborough: St. Joseph’s Hospital, where I was born, operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph, and Peterborough

Civic Hospital. They came through and closed St. Joseph’s Hospital in a nanosecond. In a nanosecond, they closed it down. I remember the Mother Superior in tears when that happened in Peterborough. It was a very, very sad day. Then we had this dance for eight years with the Conservatives: Will Peterborough get a new hospital, or Peterborough won’t get a new hospital?

But when we came to power, the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, delivered a \$200-million hospital to Peterborough, which we opened last May 9. You couldn’t find a Tory in Peterborough on that great day to be there at the opening, but we were there, along with our community citizens, to operate our brand new hospital. What a great day for the community.

I will be voting against this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The minister of innovation and several other things.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it’s pretty apparent that our friends across the way at the moment are without a permanent leader. Why? Because their position keeps changing day to day. It’s very simple. If you’re going to vote for this opposition day motion, I say to our friends in the opposition who put this forward, what you are telling the good people in rural Ontario is that you think every decision about health care should be made where? Right here in Toronto. I don’t know about you, but I’m a rural member, and I would never go back into my riding and say, “All of our health care decisions should be made by a bunch of people in Toronto.” Now, I love Toronto, and I say to my good seatmate from Scarborough and the GTA and our friend from Eglinton–Lawrence that they have much wisdom, but don’t tell me about what we need in health care in my riding.

The reason we have a brand new redevelopment at Stratford General Hospital—a \$65-million reinvestment; the reason that we have a new development in Listowel hospital that’s open—some \$20 million; and the reason there’s a new dialysis unit in Palmerston hospital is because the decisions were made where?

Interjection: Not here.

Hon. John Wilkinson: They were made back home, because people listened and they understood what the needs were.

Again, our opposition think that somehow all of this can be saved if they go back to the old ways. I’ll tell you about the old ways. When you say to the hospital sector, “You don’t have to balance your budget,” and you have to come up with the money, do you know what you do? You close hospitals. That’s what you did.

Interjections.

Hon. John Wilkinson: When you say to those hospitals, “No, no, no. You don’t have to balance your budget,” do you know what you end up doing? Exactly what you did: You fire 6,000 nurses. That’s what happens when you don’t show any fiscal restraint. That’s what happens when you decide to send a signal that it

doesn't matter what the community says, because you've got to come up with the money here.

We've gone to the local community and we've said, "It's so important that you are part of this." There are very difficult, tough decisions that have to be made day in and day out in health care, and the best decisions are those made closest to home. The people who care about health care are the people who are closest to home.

I say to the members opposite who wish that they had maybe more resources, I wonder where they were and where their party was for those communities, because I hear the member from Peterborough, and what happened in Peterborough is exactly what happened in Listowel; it's exactly what happened in Brantford; it's exactly what happened in Stratford. We had a brand new hospital half empty for 18 years waiting for other governments to get their act in gear. Now we have a brand new redevelopment that has sent a signal, putting people to work in my community at a time when those jobs are so desperately needed, because we showed that vision.

I would say to all the members, you remember that today the Conservative Party came into this House and they said, "We think all the decisions on health care should be made"—where? Right here in Toronto. I don't know if the rural members over there understand the impact of that, but I'll be glad to remind each and every one of you that when it came right down to it, you thought the old system, that status quo that we got rid of, was the way to protect your community. I would say, with all due respect, that that's not how you protect your community. You empower your community. The best care is the care closest to home, and the best people to make that decision are people who live there, not someplace else.

That you would come in here and conveniently forget your record I find exceedingly rich—and, my God, we need that today. I'm sure that when you finally get around to having a leader that you all support, something that we haven't seen in this place for quite some time, perhaps he or she will have the wisdom to get you on the straight and narrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Witmer has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes		
Bailey, Robert	Martiniuk, Gerry	Savoline, Joyce
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	
Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays		
Aggelonitis, Sophia	Jaczek, Helena	Orazietti, David
Albanese, Laura	Jeffrey, Linda	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Johnson, Rick	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sousa, Charles
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Gerretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza	
Hoy, Pat	Naqvi, Yasir	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 37.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOSPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Burlington has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Health. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question was to the Minister of Health, and it was, "Minister, how can you reassure the residents of Burlington, and all Ontarians in communities with aging hospitals, that you are ready for a pandemic, when you have done nothing to address this critical underlying issue?"

The answer from the minister was patently unacceptable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Could the members move quietly, please. Thank you.

Member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I didn't ask the minister if he put in infectious disease control regulations for new hospital builds. What I asked was, what are you doing in the hospitals where outdated facilities have been linked to the severity of an outbreak? Where was the post-outbreak analysis from C. difficile? I know that you and your government tried very hard to pretend that it did not exist; however, it did, and it was far more devastating and stole far more lives than SARS did. Yet you swept the issue right under the carpet.

In answer to the minister's inappropriate accusation that I have my facts wrong, I would like to set him straight. The fact is that the residents of Burlington have contributed over \$600 million in his Liberal government's health tax since it began. The fact is, the Liberal government, in its largesse, has returned \$17 million in additional services to our community. That is a funding shortfall of \$583 million. The fact is that the citizens of Burlington have been placed at risk by the Liberal government's refusal to reinvest some of that \$583 million into upgrades required by our community hospital.

The Ministry of Health has been saying that they are ready to deal with infectious disease in the province of Ontario. These are just press releases and photo ops. And yet, when questioned here in the House on whether or not our older hospitals are ready and able to deal effectively with a pandemic, the minister prefers to launch a personal attack.

Well, Minister, in that question I wanted to know if you have developed plans for the hospitals that have not made the cut on your infrastructure list. The truth is that the minister's infrastructure renaissance is barely a starving-artist exhibit. The truth is that there are only a handful of projects that are underway, and even those have just barely turned over the sod. How are these facilities that have not yet been built going to have a positive impact on health care now, when we need them for emerging infectious diseases? I want to know what plans are in place to support these older hospitals when—not if, but when—they deal with a virulent infectious disease.

I would like to remind the minister of something he said in May 1997, before he became part of the government side. "It's easy to get caught up in programs and policies," he said, "and we talk in terms of billions of dollars. But fundamentally what governments do has an impact on people at a very basic level."

Clearly, what's good for the goose doesn't seem to be good for the minister. Now, as Minister of Health, he prefers to focus on the billions of dollars instead of impacting people on a very basic level. Well, his words ring very hollow to someone who loses their loved one to the next infectious disease because we all know—and he knows himself—that you have not done enough to stop it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

We will continue to invest more in our hospitals and in the health care sector overall, just as we have every single year that we've been in office. Hospital funding in Ontario has increased from \$10.9 billion in 2003-04 to \$15.4 billion in 2009, an overall 37% increase. Hospitals across the province will receive \$617 million this year. That's a 4.7% increase over last year. Our partners in this sector requested a 2.1% increase in overall base funding for 2009; our budget in 2009 delivered on that commitment.

The hospital sector in Ontario is growing. In fact, employment in Ontario hospitals has increased by approximately 17% since 2003. That's 31,000 new jobs in Ontario.

We have made significant investments at Joseph Brant hospital, as we have in all hospitals. We recognize the aging infrastructure of our health care facilities. That is why we embarked on an ambitious \$30-billion, five-year capital plan, which has seen 100 major capital projects under way—100 new projects since 2003.

Our shared goal is to deliver high-quality health care services and to always improve our ability to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. That's why we developed leading-edge guidelines for new hospital construction. Generic output specifications are one of the many tools developed to address infection prevention and control. These new provincial guidelines will build on the design standards already being implemented in hospital projects.

Since 2003, we have increased health care spending by 37%. We've made the right investments in our hospitals in this province. Our investments at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital include a more than \$18-million increase in base funding since 2003-04, which is more than a 22% increase, and \$113,000 for 102 general surgeries. This is in addition to the over \$13 million in total funding that this hospital has received since 2004 to reduce wait times. That's 15,816 more procedures for residents in this particular area.

As part of the May 2008 emergency room announcement, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LIHN received \$2.3 million to provide community alternatives to hospital care, with \$178,500 to the LIHN for new nurse-led long-term-care outreach teams.

New long-term-care beds in operation or announced since 2003 include 304 new beds in Burlington and 3,298 new beds in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LIHN area.

This government has made major investments in health care in Ontario, and we will continue to do more.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Sarnia—Lambton has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Health. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I was appalled by the answer given by the minister today about the case I raised about Allister McCabe, now deceased, a long-time resident of Sarnia—Lambton. Mr. McCabe was the former chief of police in the village of Point Edward. In October 2008, Allister was suspected of having Hodgkin's lymphoma and needed an ultrasound-guided needle biopsy in order to be properly diagnosed. The doctor providing his personal care in Petrolia told him it could be done

immediately in London, at St. Joe's hospital. The only hitch was that the hospital refused to do the procedure because he was "from out of town." What the hospital was saying to Allister and his family was, "You need to seek treatment in your LHIN, and since Sarnia and London are not in the same LHIN, we won't treat you"—quite as simple as that.

1810

Unfortunately, the treatment and wait time is longer in the Erie St. Clair LHIN, and, as members of this House know, early detection is the key to beating cancer. Unfortunately, Allister passed away on November 8, 2008.

The minister said today, in reply to a question that I asked him, that the health care system is seamless. That seems to be contradicted in a letter from St. Joe's health centre in London. This letter was sent to the McCabe family after they wrote a letter of complaint to St. Joe's hospital on the denial of treatment for their late family member. The letter reads:

"St. Joseph's Health Care has a repatriation policy. This means that patients are to receive care within their own geographic territory. You reside in LHIN 1 and if the care required can be provided within your LHIN that is where it should be provided."

Who is right? The minister says the health care system is seamless and this sort of repatriation policy doesn't exist, but the hospital that is delivering the service is denying patients access based on where they live. The hospital has even confirmed this in writing to the family, and I have a copy of that letter for any member who would like to see it.

When you live in Sarnia-Lambton and you need advanced medical care that can't be provided in Lambton county, it's traditionally been provided in London. You don't stop and think, "Is London in our LHIN or is it in someone else's LHIN?" Patients don't travel from Sarnia to Windsor for health care. Traditionally, they've travelled to London.

Recently, it was reported in the London Free Press that London Health Sciences Centre was turning Sarnia residents away unless they were near death. Shameful. Again, it was unacceptable that this minister took two weeks or more to even respond to a letter from the mayor of Sarnia, who made inquiries about this. As the mayor of Sarnia, Mike Bradley, said, this policy was like playing Russian roulette with the lives of people in southwestern Ontario.

It seems to me that it is one thing for the minister to say we have a seamless system, but when the rubber hits the road, the minister should act to fix it. This minister and his ministry seem content to bury their heads in the sand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the member from Sarnia-Lambton for his question.

I can't speak to the specific case the member outlined, but I can tell you that LHINs are part of this government's plan to transform the health system in order to make it more patient-centred, efficient and accountable. They serve all Ontarians. Our health system has no borders or boundaries. A woman from Sudbury should be able to get care in Ottawa and a man in Ottawa should be able to get care in Sudbury. The goal of our LHINs is community-based care, reflecting the needs of that community—planned, coordinated and funded in an integrated manner, building a health care system around the needs of our patients and communities. But ultimately, they are to serve all Ontarians.

Hospitals in the South West LHIN have received a base funding crease of \$313 million, or 29.1%, since 2003.

LHINs are not another layer of bureaucracy. They are not intended to be divisive. They're about giving people a say in their local health care decisions; developing and implementing new, innovative health care programs; and, through community engagement, determining local health care priorities in the areas that these LHINs serve.

The LHINs spent more than 18 months engaging over 40,000 people in their communities to learn and help shape local health care priorities—new and innovative programs such as a \$1.1-billion aging-at-home strategy to help more seniors live healthy, independent lives in the comfort and dignity of their homes.

In the London case—I just want to give you a certain quote from Gary Switzer, the CEO of the local health integration network. He said, "That is the hospital's decision. It has nothing to do with the LHINs. No one here is forcing anyone to do anything."

"What we really want is the best access for the best care in a timely fashion. If a procedure is available somewhere else, we need to get that point across to the referring physicians."

There is no policy through us or the LHINs to set boundaries, and hospitals do not reject patients based on where they live. I believe there might be a miscommunication, and if there is a miscommunication from the hospital, I'd encourage the member from Sarnia-Lambton to at least speak to the CEO of the hospital.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday, April 30, 2009.

The House adjourned at 1815.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Supérieur-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora-Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest-Glanbrook	
Iaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton-Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Keles, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Klonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Koal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Kovac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
Koehnle, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Krangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga-Brampton South / Mississauga-Brampton-Sud	
Karchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Kartiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Katthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Kauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
KcGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
KcMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Westdale	
KcNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Kcilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Killer, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Killer, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East-Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	
Killooy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Kitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron-Bruce	
Koridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Kunro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Kurdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Karvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Koole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziatti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziatti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	6392
Mrs. Julia Munro	6392
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6392

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Nail and Sail	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	6392
Tourism	
Mr. Pat Hoy	6393
Renewable energy	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	6393
Renewable energy	
Ms. Helena Jaczek	6393
Anti-bullying initiatives	
Mrs. Julia Munro	6393
Vaisakhi	
Mr. Vic Dhillon	6394
Hospital funding	
Mme France Gélinas	6394
Sir Winston Churchill Collegiate and Vocational Institute	
Mr. Bill Mauro	6394
Shinhan Bank	
Mr. David Zimmer	6394
Notice of dissatisfaction	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6395

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly	
Mr. Joe Dickson	6395
Report adopted	6395

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Ticket Speculation Amendment Act, 2009, Bill 172, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle, projet de loi 172, M. Bentley	
First reading agreed to	6395

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Consumer protection / Protection du consommateur	
Hon. Christopher Bentley	6395
Environment industry	
Hon. John Gerretsen	6396
Consumer protection	
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	6396
Environment industry	
Mr. Toby Barrett	6397
Consumer protection	
Mr. Peter Kormos	6397
Environment industry	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6398

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hospital funding	
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk	6398
Hospital services	
Mr. Kim Craiton	6398
Multiple myeloma	
Mr. Robert Bailey	6399
Cemeteries	
Mr. Jeff Leal	6399
Hospital funding	
Mr. Norm Miller	6399
Hospital services	
Mr. Kim Craiton	6399
Hospital funding	
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6400
Air quality	
Mr. Charles Sousa	6400
Ontario budget	
Mr. Norm Miller	6400
School funding	
Mr. Phil McNeely	6400
Long-term care	
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6401
Protection for workers	
Mr. Mike Colle	6401

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Hospital services	
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6401
Mme France Gélinas	6403

Hon. John Gerretsen	6407
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk	6408
Mrs. Liz Sandals	6409
Mr. Robert Bailey	6409
Mr. Pat Hoy	6410
Mr. Norm Miller	6411
Mr. Khalil Ramal	6412
Mr. Toby Barrett	6412
Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis	6414
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6414
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	6415
Mr. Bill Mauro	6415
Mr. Jeff Leal	6416
Hon. John Wilkinson	6416
Motion negated	6417

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Hospital infrastructure

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6417
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	6418

Local health integration networks

Mr. Robert Bailey	6418
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	6419

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 29 April 2009 / Mercredi 29 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Toxics Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 167, Mr. Gerretsen / Loi de 2009 sur la réduction des toxiques, projet de loi 167, M. Gerretsen

Mr. Khalil Ramal	6371
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6373
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6373
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6373
Mr. Toby Barrett	6373
Mr. Khalil Ramal	6374
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6374
Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	6376
Mr. Toby Barrett	6376
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6376
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6376
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6377
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6377
Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis.....	6380
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6380
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6380
Mrs. Julia Munro	6381
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6381
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6381

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	6381
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	6381
Mr. Kim Craitor	6381
Mr. Norm Miller	6382
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6382
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6382
Hon. Gerry Phillips	6382
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6382
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6382
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6382
Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis.....	6382
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6382
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6382

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Infectious disease control

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6382
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6382

Health care

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6383
Hon. David Caplan.....	6383

Infectious disease control

Mme France Gélinas	6384
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6384

Hospital funding

Mme France Gélinas	6385
Hon. David Caplan.....	6385

Local health integration networks

Mr. Robert Bailey.....	6385
Hon. David Caplan.....	6386

Hospital services

Mr. Peter Kormos	6386
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6386

Research and innovation

Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6386
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	6387

Hospital funding

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6387
Hon. David Caplan.....	6387

Cancer treatment

Mme France Gélinas	6388
Hon. David Caplan.....	6388

Volunteers

Mrs. Liz Sandals.....	6388
Hon. Michael Chan	6389

Hospital infrastructure

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6389
Hon. David Caplan.....	6389

Tuition

Mr. Rosario Marchese	6390
Hon. John Milloy	6390

Drinking and driving

Mr. Khalil Ramal	6390
Hon. James J. Bradley	6390

Hospital funding

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6391
Hon. David Caplan.....	6391

Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6392
Hon. Michael Gravelle	6392

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6392
--------------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CA20N
X1
-D23



No. 143

N° 143

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

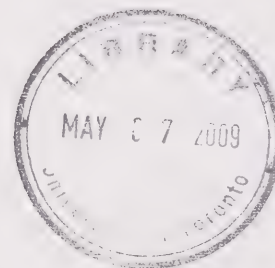
Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 30 April 2009

Jeudi 30 avril 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DE LA PAUVRETÉ

Ms. Matthews moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario / Projet de loi 152, Loi concernant une stratégie à long terme de réduction de la pauvreté en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Jeff Leal: One of the best.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: "One of the best" is right.

It's a great privilege for me to rise today to speak in support of Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, which I introduced in February and which is now before the House for third reading. If passed, this act will take Ontario a major step forward in our fight against poverty. It would bring about a fundamental shift in the way we approach poverty and poverty reduction. It would ensure that all who serve in this House in successive governments are focused on this issue and take steps to reduce poverty, and it would ensure that those people who are living in poverty and who are working in this fight to reduce poverty in Ontario have their voices heard.

It was the voices of all of these organizations, groups and individuals that informed the development of Ontario's first-ever poverty reduction strategy, Breaking the Cycle, which we released last December, and it was these voices that we recently heard at the public hearings on this bill and to which we have carefully listened. The amendments in the act respond to the constructive suggestions we heard. They make this bill even stronger. The hearings confirmed for me what we already knew: that now is the time to enshrine in law our commitment to an ongoing poverty reduction strategy in the province of

Ontario, and that setting an initial target specifically to reduce child poverty in Ontario is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do.

Many, many groups came before the Standing Committee on Social Policy or took time to write down and submit their ideas. We received thoughtful suggestions from all participants. I want to thank all of the people and organizations who have participated actively in the democratic process this way. We are better for it, and so is this bill. We had time to consider the constructive suggestions that were made, and we're pleased to have responded to requests for amendments. The amendments we've made reflect the all-hands-on-deck approach that is needed to create opportunity for all Ontarians to achieve their full potential. We need everyone working together toward a shared goal to make the progress we can and we must make.

I sincerely appreciate the work of the critics of the other parties to improve this bill, and I especially want to thank Michael Prue for the commitment he has to poverty reduction in this province. I want to thank my parliamentary assistant, Maria Van Bommel. Her thoughtful, steady leadership, combined with her sense of humour and strong values, have really improved this bill. Thank you, Maria.

I want to tell you about what we heard and how the bill was amended coming out of the standing committee process. I won't speak to every change, but I do want to give you a sense of where we were and what progress we've made. We've heard that clearer wording would be helpful so there is no confusion that poverty reduction is to benefit all Ontarians, not just children. Our first poverty reduction strategy, Breaking the Cycle, does address poverty among adults, but certainly our primary focus is on reducing child poverty. This bill was specifically drafted to allow future strategies to have different priorities and emphases.

Let me be clear: We have not wavered from our initial focus on children and breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Our poverty reduction strategy has a principal target of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25% over the next five years. It will raise the standard of living of all children living in poverty and move 25% of them out of poverty altogether. But we have ensured that there is a sharper focus on adults in the principles of the bill. These principles will apply to all future poverty reduction strategies. Reducing poverty involves improving opportunities for everyone.

We also heard that we needed to be clear in the bill about our overarching vision for poverty reduction in Ontario, so the bill now indicates that Ontario aspires to

be a leading jurisdiction in reducing poverty, something that was already a clear part of the strategy we launched last December. We're resolute in our leadership.

We heard that a greater level of detail would be beneficial in the principle that stresses the importance of the full participation of all Ontarians. We have responded by adding reference to race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status and disability. We believe that these additions further sharpen our attention on opportunity for all—because this bill must speak to all Ontarians and our shared goals.

We heard that it was not enough to talk about single moms as being at heightened risk of poverty; we needed to talk about women as a group. We listened to the presenters; we considered what they said; we agreed, and, as a committee, we made that change unanimously.

The bill envisions that we would report annually on the strategy and that the minister must consult on it regularly. At least every five years, the strategy would be assessed by the government and a new or renewed strategy would be developed. We have now amended the bill to specify certain groups who must be part of those consultations. On the matter of annual reporting on key opportunity indicators such as income levels, school success, health care and housing, we heard that reports ought to be tabled in the Legislature. I'm pleased to say that this is another positive change we've made to strengthen the bill, and it's in addition to the requirement that reports must be available on a government of Ontario website. The bill now includes a specific and very tight time frame for tabling annual reports.

We also heard that the bill needed to be clear about what we meant by involvement in poverty reduction, especially the involvement of Ontarians living in poverty. That was an area people felt quite strongly about. The response of the committee was to support an amendment that would clarify that Ontarians, especially people living in poverty, are to be involved in the design and the implementation of every new or modified poverty reduction strategy.

0910

We heard about the importance of the non-profit, charitable and voluntary sector organizations to poverty reduction. All members of this House know how significant the non-profit, charitable and voluntary organizations are in strengthening communities and making a positive contribution to the economy. We listened and we acted by passing an amendment that provided this important recognition. As you can see, this government welcomed advice on how to improve this legislation, and we act when we are informed by the thoughtful advice of the people of Ontario, who are every bit as determined as we are to reduce poverty in this wonderful province. Overall, we now have a strengthened bill which will provide a continuing and powerful focus on poverty reduction over the life of successive generations.

If passed, this historic bill would propel us into a new era of fighting poverty. With its passage, we would be

taking another major step forward in supporting children, adults and low-income families, especially in these challenging economic times. It would help Ontario emerge from the current economic crisis stronger and more prosperous. With the momentum we are establishing now, the engaged support and commitment of countless Ontarians and the power of this bill to ensure political accountability, Ontario is firmly positioning itself as a leader in fighting poverty.

This legislation is about providing hope and securing opportunity. Eliminating poverty will not happen overnight; it will take years. It will take an ongoing collaborative effort as well as an ongoing commitment and political will. We know the effort will be worth it, because when Ontarians succeed, Ontario succeeds. For all of these reasons, I call on my colleagues in the House to join me in supporting passage of this historic legislation.

Before I pass over to my parliamentary assistant, I do want to especially thank the members of the cabinet committee on poverty reduction, who really drove this strategy. I'm so proud of the work that was done. I first want to thank the Premier for having the wisdom to make this a priority of our government; my co-chair, George Smith-erman; Dwight Duncan, Kathleen Wynne, John Milloy, Madeleine Meilleur, David Caplan, Chris Bentley, Michael Chan, Margaret Best, Jim Watson, Bas Balkissoon, Lou Rinaldi, David Oraziotti, Carol Mitchell and Bruce Crozier, all members who were anxious to be part of the process of reducing poverty. Thank you to every single one. Everyone made a contribution; together we have done something quite special.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I too am pleased to rise today to join with my colleagues and speak in support of Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, which was introduced in February by my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Services, Deb Matthews.

If passed, this legislation will enshrine in law a long-term commitment to reducing poverty in Ontario for successive governments, in good times and in bad. It builds on Ontario's first-ever poverty reduction strategy, launched last December, a plan that will, for the first time in the history of our province, set a hard target to reduce child poverty by 25% over the next five years, lifting 90,000 children out of poverty and giving low-income parents the support they need to build better lives for their kids. Not only does this hold future governments accountable for setting strategies and targets for reducing poverty, but it ensures that the voices of Ontarians will continue to be heard.

Our government is already making good on this promise. To support low-income families facing these challenging economic times, the government is proposing to increase the Ontario child benefit this July from \$600 to a maximum of \$1,100 per child per year. That is two years ahead of schedule. The Ontario child benefit helps 1.3 million children by giving monthly support to their families. Ontario is also planning to increase its investment

in social and affordable housing to create short-term jobs in construction and renovation while improving the lives of people with low incomes.

When this benefit is fully implemented, the total income for a single parent with two children under the age of 13, working full-time at a minimum wage, would be 54% higher than it was in 2003, and that's with no new federal investments.

Taken together, our Breaking the Cycle poverty reduction strategy and this legislation, if passed, would provide children, adults, and low-income families with the opportunities and the supports they need to reach their full potential. In the current economic climate, tackling poverty is both the right thing and the smart thing to do. We're going to need everyone at their best, everyone contributing and everyone working together.

Tackling poverty in tough economic times makes more sense than ever. The poor are the first to feel the impact of an economic downturn and they are the last to see the benefits when the rebound comes and prosperity returns. Failing to act now is simply not acceptable. Our recent budget lays out a plan to help families affected by the global economic crisis and positions Ontario to become more competitive for a more prosperous future. It reaffirms our commitment to supporting families by accelerating the phase-in of the Ontario child benefit two years ahead of schedule, as I said earlier. It increases social assistance rates and invests in social housing infrastructure. It also proposes a comprehensive tax reform package that includes moving to a single value-added sales tax, effective July 2010. The tax reforms are the single most important thing we can do to strengthen our economy. They will lead to more investments and more jobs for our families. Together with poverty reduction, these initiatives will help Ontarians and our province emerge from these challenging times stronger and more prosperous.

One of the biggest thrusts behind our Breaking the Cycle strategy is to continue building a strong, publicly funded education system. This bill, if passed, would help ensure that we deliver over the long term by mandating annual reporting on key indicators of opportunity. There is no better indicator of opportunity than access to education. Our plan includes a range of new educational projects that build on the signature investments we've made over the last five years. We're bringing together more supports for at-risk kids in schools, more summer job opportunities for students and disadvantaged young people, more after-school recreation programs in high-needs neighbourhoods and more help for parents to get involved in their children's education.

For example, we are tripling the number of parenting and family literacy centres to a total of 300 across the province. We're encouraging families to engage in children's learning, familiarizing them with school routines and linking them with resources for special needs, health and services. We will also launch a community hub program that brings together a range of community partners to better coordinate social and educational support ser-

vices so that they meet the needs of those who are using them.

One of the decisions we made early on was that setting a hard target was the best way to mobilize resources and focus people on a shared goal. That's why our strategy sets the ambitious target of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25% over five years. We're committed to moving forward with our current poverty reduction strategy and we're proud of this act that, if passed, would hold our government and future governments accountable for the progress made on reducing poverty in Ontario. The act would require successive governments to act on poverty for years to come by setting a new poverty reduction strategy every five years.

The fight against poverty is difficult at the best of times. In a period of economic upheaval such as we are finding ourselves in now, the challenge is even greater and the need even more pressing. We have a long road ahead and we need to be realistic about the fact that global economic hardships will challenge all of us, every step of the way. Now, more than ever, is the right time to act. We need everyone to be part of the solution: all levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and citizens across the province. We know we can't do this alone. Meeting our goal depends on having a willing partner in the federal government, and a growing economy.

If passed, this legislation would give Ontario, for the first time ever, both the concrete plan and a long-term commitment needed to break the cycle of poverty. It is a bold piece of legislation that speaks to our best values, to our commitment that Ontario remains a province of strength and opportunity, a province where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential, regardless of where they start in life, in good times or in bad. For the first time, we have an opportunity to legislate a plan for generations to come that will hold future governments accountable to poverty reduction. For all of these reasons, I call on my colleagues in the House to join me in supporting passage of this historic legislation.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise with questions and comments, in fact, for both the minister and the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. The minister thanked me during her speech, and I thank you for acknowledging that I have been here every inch of the way, pushing and prodding and making sure that the bill reflected what truly, in my view and in the view of many poverty advocates and those who live in poverty, is essential for it to work.

I thank the member from Lambton as well, in her role as parliamentary assistant and on the committee. A very rare thing happened. I think I'd like to share it with the Legislature. I have been around here for seven and a half years. In the NDP, we only get one member on the committee, so invariably it's me. This was the first time I was actually ever consulted on any bill—the first time. She

came to me on the last day, or the day that we were about to do the clause-by-clause, and indicated the government's willingness—we put in, I think, 25 amendments—to acknowledge five of them. Although it did not go nearly as far as I wish it had—I'll save that for my speech—it was the first time that we ever successfully put five amendments forward in any committee, at least to my knowledge. So I'd like to thank the members for what they had to say today. It is a better bill today than it was at second reading, it is far more encompassing, and they are to be in part congratulated for what happened, because I think the lion's share of the work was done by these two members. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is an admirable bill to bring forward. Who is going to be against poverty reduction? We have some concern about the chances of success for this particular bill. The bill itself, of course, does not reduce poverty. It's rather heavy on the bureaucracy, with a purpose to establishing mechanisms, I suppose you could say, that would support poverty strategies. There are a few areas of concern that remain, after committee, that the bill does not actually penalize governments or institutions that fail to meet their goals. That penalty could be a reduction of fees, it could be a reduction of areas that they failed to meet, but if there's no penalty for not meeting a goal, perhaps there would be less enthusiasm to meet that goal.

The bill does allow the government to set targets. The problem with the government setting those targets: action towards those targets is dependent on a lot of other people. So the government doesn't have a lot of control over how those targets are going to be influenced or met. This bill is very dependent on the actions of other levels of government and non-government organizations, and that is problematic in coming to a successful conclusion to a bill of this nature. I guess for that reason, we think the bill is somewhat vague in the direction that it's headed, where it may not have success in accomplishing the poverty reduction that we all would like to see.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to speak to the Poverty Reduction Act. The other day, I was reading in my study at home and I came across an article that told the story of a person in a large American city on the Canadian border who had recently passed away. In the process of the city, the municipal authorities, cleaning up the person's small room where they had spent the bulk of their remaining years of their life—and it was a small room: a bed, a chair and a little table. They gathered up the meagre belongings and they found a diary. The person had made the last entry in the diary a few days before dying in bed. I guess the person knew that death was imminent, and the last entry in the diary was, in effect, the summary of that person's life in poverty. The diary entry was just a very simple diary entry—and keep in mind that death was imminent—and the last entry was:

"Mine was a wasted life, full of degradation, insecurity and of not belonging."

What this bill is designed to do is to work toward and hopefully ensure that we never see that kind of diary entry in the last stages of a person's life. Think about what that person said—lived an entire life in poverty. The conclusion of that person's life was: "Mine was a wasted life, full of degradation, insecurity and of not belonging."

You know, we have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly, I am looking forward to my colleague from Beaches–East York's comments on this bill, but suffice to say, I just want to hearken back to a historical moment, and that was a moment when all federal parties got together and said they wanted to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Out of that sprang Campaign 2000. We know how that ended. In fact, child poverty is worse now than it was back then. It's certainly worse now than it was in the year 2000, and it continues to grow.

My great hope and the hope of all Ontarians who are anti-poverty activists is that the same thing doesn't happen to this bill and this set of targets, and that this bill and this set of targets are not just the minister's—hers alone—but that they are shared by all of the cabinet portfolios. To really eradicate poverty, what we need is action on housing. We need dramatic action on housing, where we've seen very, very little. We certainly need dramatic action on the health file. In Europe, where dental care is assumed in many countries until age 18, bad teeth are a sign of poverty, and bad teeth don't get you the job.

There are all sorts of markers of poverty that really expand beyond her file to all files that are held by cabinet ministers. We hope they all take it seriously within their own file and that they step up to the plate with some concrete measures, actions and a timetable that will meet with this one so that, truly, this doesn't go the way of Campaign 2000, but that we actually see the 25% reduction. It would be beyond sad if that day comes to pass in five years and we're left with a growing child poverty rate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The minister or the parliamentary assistant now has up to two minutes for a response.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the members for Beaches–East York, Halton, Willowdale and Parkdale–High Park for their comments. I think both the members for Halton and Parkdale–High Park talked about how important it is that we all work together. I think the member from Parkdale–High Park saw that as a positive; the member from Halton maybe thought it was impossible to get all hands on deck, all people working together. I absolutely believe we can and must do that if we want to make the gains we know we can and must make.

0930

I want to talk about the story that the member from Willowdale told. I just want to comment on the man who wrote, "Mine was a wasted life, full of degradation, insecurity and not belonging." I think in fact, because those words have been mentioned in the Legislature, those words will now live on and serve as a symbol for all of us. That was not a wasted life. While that man wrote those lines, he may have considered it to have been a wasted life, but in fact that man, in writing those words, has actually informed this debate.

I think what's really important, as we move forward on poverty reduction, is that we do see the human face of poverty, that we understand that we can use statistics and use numbers, but really, they are individual stories. Every story is a little bit different, but with common threads throughout.

So I move forward with optimism on this. I move forward because I know that in this province there are people with enormous untapped potential, and that's what our poverty reduction strategy is all about. It's about tapping that potential so that no one feels that their life was a wasted life, so that no one feels they don't belong and so that everyone can make the contribution they are able to make and have a sense of belonging and social inclusion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand here to support, the government should know at the outset, although I consider it my duty and my privilege, as a member of the opposition, to oppose. I will be supporting the bill, but I will be critical to the end.

That is because, as you have heard so many times in this Legislature and I have repeated throughout my entire political life, I am a boy from Regent Park. I grew up with poverty around me, although I cannot actually state that we were so poor as to not have things. My father always had a job. He worked as a factory worker, and we had a lifestyle, I think, pretty common or perhaps slightly better than some of those who lived in Regent Park at the time.

But I grew up seeing poverty. I grew up not understanding why it existed, why children who came to my school had no shoes. Oftentimes they had rubber boots only—winter, summer that's what they wore, the things we call Wellingtons today. They came with holes in their shirts and clothes. They came without lunch. It seemed to me to be a pretty bad life, and I resolved myself at a very early age to be a politician. That might be a very strange thing for people, but every day, when I stand here, I stand here living my dream, because what I wanted to do from the time I was a young person was to be a politician and to stand up for the people from whence I came, to give voice to their concerns, because I always believed, and still believe, that very few politicians listen to them about what they need or what they want.

It is in that vein that I rise in support of this bill. I recognize the difficulties inherent in the bill, and I recognize

even more the difficulties that will befall this government and any subsequent government, because this bill, although it is intended to set a yardstick and to cover the length and breadth of the two-plus years remaining in this government's mandate, it cannot, by law, encumber future governments. They can and they will, if they choose to do so, not follow what is being passed here today.

I hope that is not the case. I hope that is not the case because it is within our prerogative, our mandate and our ability to end poverty in this province. It ought not to be here, in a place as rich as Ontario and in a country as free and beautiful as Canada. This ought not to be the norm for so many children.

Having said that, I had a friend who talked to me yesterday—she told me something, and I was not privy to it because it was the minister appearing before Equal Voice. The statement that is alleged to have been made by the minister—and again, I was not privy to it, nobody's seen it in writing, but I believe she said something to the effect that she thanked the women members of the Liberal caucus especially for the work that they did around this bill, because without women—correct me if I'm wrong—she doesn't think that this would have happened. She is nodding in the affirmative, so I take that to be true.

Well, I'd like to thank them as well. I think it is another reason to elect more women. Bills such as this are more deeply felt, in my view, by women, because more women live in poverty than men; more women suffer abuse than men; more women have low-paying jobs than men. I think that women generally understand the necessity of a bill like this. So for those women members of the Liberal caucus who helped, I thank them as well.

The NDP has expressed, from the beginning, concern about poverty. I know that last year, when the minister stood across the street in the Mowat Block and talked about the poverty strategy, I was not pleased, to put it bluntly. I was not pleased because although I agreed that the strategy for getting rid of poverty for children was a good strategy, it seemed to me at that juncture and at that point that everyone else was being left out. It seemed to me, at that point and at that juncture, that aboriginal Ontarians were being left out, people of colour were being left out, adults were being left out and people with disabilities were being left out. That's why, when this bill came forward on second reading, I was not pleased with the contents of the bill, because I continued to feel that those people who live in poverty and will continue to live in poverty for a long period of time should not be left out. We have an obligation, not only to the children of this province but to all people, to eliminate poverty. Some of it is systemic; some of it is endemic. It simply exists, and it has continued to exist throughout my entire lifetime. That is why we fought so strongly in committee. That is why we are glad that the minister has seen fit to make so many changes in a bill.

I got a copy of the bill yesterday. Normally, when you get a bill after second reading, you open it up and there

might be one or two little, tiny amendments in it. It's highlighted by having a different font and a different texture to the font wherever changes have been made. This bill is absolutely replete with changes. Every single page has changes upon changes that have been made to the bill.

I'd like to thank, first of all, those people who came forward to make deputations. I know there were a lot more who wanted to make deputations than who actually were allowed the opportunity. Perhaps the government, since they were so intent on making these changes, should have had another day, because I would have liked to hear some of the groups who wanted to come forward who didn't have that opportunity. That's in the past.

I'd like to thank some of the people—the 25 in 5 Network, the Social Planning Network of Ontario, the Colour of Poverty Campaign, Campaign 2000 and all of the other groups that came forward to talk about this bill. They were adamant that we include adults, that we include children, that we include people of colour; that we make the necessary changes to make this an inclusive bill. The NDP listened intently, of course, to all of them, as I believe the government did as well, and we made amendments, including strengthening the goals of this strategy to include a vision to eliminate, rather than just reduce, poverty. I speak to that because that's not a part of the goal. I think it should have been. I'm going to save that for a little bit.

We talked about making the bill more inclusive, including adults rather than just families and children. We put a special emphasis on people of colour, immigrants and other at-risk groups. We asked for a strengthened accountability to create an independent panel to advise the government and review the strategies and their impacts. We requested the tabling of annual reports and reviews before the Legislature, requiring that it address the causes of poverty, rather than merely the symptoms.

We asked about recognizing racism and discrimination as a cause of poverty. We asked about measuring income, housing and education as indicators. We talked about broadening the focus to include adults. The government members on the social policy committee responded in large part to our challenge and took some steps to strengthen the bill. I'd just like to go through some of those that I think have been strengthened—and justifiably so.

0940

Poverty reduction strategies will be guided by a vision that "reflects Ontario's aspiration to be a leading jurisdiction in reducing poverty." As I said, and I will talk about this later, I'm happy to be a leading jurisdiction, but I think that simply reducing poverty should not be the end goal. We can be number one, but until such time as we eliminate poverty, we can never say that we're the best.

The second one was the recognition that adult poverty, as well as the poverty of children and families, must be tackled by poverty reduction strategies. The government set a fixed date. It was not the fixed date that we put for-

ward, but it is a fixed date. March 31 of the following year is established for the annual report to be laid before the Legislative Assembly each and every year. This is important for the assembly to see not only what is happening in terms of government programs, but it also coincides precisely, or almost precisely, with the annual budget. That is an important earmark—what happens in subsequent budgets—because I do not believe that it is possible to eliminate poverty in any form without putting the necessary funds behind it. It's almost impossible to simply legislate poverty away. It will require government expenditure, and sometimes considerable government expenditure, in such areas as education, housing, welfare rates, ODSP rates, food supplements, rent supplements and all of the things that keep people in poverty. Having a date of March 31 is a good date because it will invariably be almost exactly the time that subsequent budgets are brought forward, so we can see whether or not the bill is an empty shell, or whether there is a will on the part of this government and subsequent governments to put the necessary resources into it to give it life.

There was stronger language regarding the significance of discrimination on the grounds of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability and the need for particular attention to be paid to the barriers faced by these groups. I cannot underestimate, or I think we ought not to underestimate, how important all of this is because invariably, when you look at who is in poverty, those who suffer it most are people who are disabled. Those who suffer it most are First Nations communities. Those who suffer it most are new immigrants and people of colour. Those who suffer it most are women and those who suffer prejudice and, as a result, poverty can include people based on sexual orientation, age and marital status.

I was overjoyed to see that women are now included in the list of groups at heightened risk of experiencing poverty, because in my young life in Regent Park, those who were poor mostly came from single-parent families led by women. It wasn't always women who had been abused and it wasn't always women who had been abandoned; when I was younger, a great many of them were widows because industrial accidents in those days took a much higher toll than today. People did not live as long as today, and medicare was not the law of the land. Poor people did not have the same kind of access to health, they did not have the same kind of access to education to know about it, and they did not have the same opportunities to work in a workplace that was free from disease or was free from industrial accidents. A great many of those single-parent families were widows and there was very little money available to them. Oftentimes women struggled against great odds to bring up one or two or five or more children and grew up being real strengths and pillars. We need to recognize the work that they did.

Also, the government now has stronger language to support the involvement of Ontarians, especially people living in poverty, in the design and implementation of

poverty reduction strategies. The original bill did not contemplate involving those who lived in poverty, and the words have now been added to make sure that they have a voice at the table and that they cannot be ignored.

What they have to say is absolutely important because you can listen to someone like me, who lived around poverty, and possibly in it, but doesn't anymore; you can listen to people who work with the poor but who are not themselves poor; but you really need to listen to someone who experiences it day in and day out to understand the depth it has in their psyche, the way it motivates and makes decision-making difficult—how they have to choose between going to a doctor's appointment because a subway token in Toronto costs \$2.50 or eating that day—to fully understand what living in poverty is all about.

There is a recognition today of the significance of the third sector in poverty reduction work and stronger language regarding the indicators to be used to measure poverty specifics—the determinants of poverty—including, but not limited to, income, education, health, housing and standards of living.

Last, but not least, is stronger language regarding the individuals and groups to be consulted by the minister on a regular basis. What it now states is: "The individuals and groups to be consulted by the minister must include representatives of people at heightened risk of poverty, including immigrants, women, single mothers, people with disabilities, aboriginal peoples and racialized groups."

I'm saying all the good things before I become a little critical, and it's only going to be a little.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, it's important.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Michael, don't spoil it.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm not—no.

Those are the good things that happened, and as I said in my earlier two-minute comment, this is a very rare thing because most times, when members of this Legislature, particularly sitting on the opposition side, go to committee, their ideas are not often listened to. I commend the minister, the parliamentary assistant and all the others for listening to some of the ideas, but especially for listening to the people who came forward to make the depositions. It was a very rare event. In listening to those people, the bill was so profoundly changed, and so profoundly changed to the benefit, that I can stand here to support it today.

I am a New Democrat. You ask me what I would do differently. I want to tell you what I was hoping would have been in the bill and perhaps what can be included in the bill in the future. I think it needs to be part of the record how I think that this good bill could have been an excellent bill, how we could have done even more to improve the bill than we did.

The first thing I want to talk about is a vision of a poverty-free Ontario, to build a strong, long-term commitment to eradicating poverty in our province. We put forward a motion that asked that the goal of Ontario was not to be the leading jurisdiction in reducing poverty but

to be the first province in Canada to eliminate poverty. I asked a question, and I used a scientific term to the parliamentary assistant, because the government has, as part of its mandate, to reduce poverty by 25% over five years and, looking down the road, is talking about eliminating it by 50% in 10 years. The government said this over and over again.

So if you eliminate half of the poverty in 10 years, what is the longer-term goal? To me, it would have been, if we use that same yardstick, that in 20 years we eliminate poverty. That's what I was hoping the government would have said, that that's the long-term goal of this government and every subsequent government to follow; that 20 years from today we would eliminate poverty, and that is our goal and we want to be the first jurisdiction in Canada, or perhaps one of the first ones in the world, to actually eliminate poverty in 20 years.

Instead, the government chose that they wanted to be a leading jurisdiction. So I asked the question, and it was not tongue-in-cheek, but I used a scientific analogy about fissionable material and the half-life of fissionable material. For those who are scientists at all or know about science, uranium or plutonium or any of those products all have a half-life, so that after a given period of time, half of it is gone, and then, after the next period of time, half of the half is gone, and then half of the half of the half is gone. But it never ends, because in the end, there will still be fissionable material, no matter how small it is. That is what I liken this bill to and what the government has done, saying there will always be poverty.

0950

What you are saying is if you can get rid of half of it and then half of the half, and half of the half again over several mandates, then that's a good thing. I'm not going to say it's a bad thing, but in the end there is still something left, and there ought not to be, and that ought not to be our goal. Our goal should have been the eradication of poverty from this province once and for all. If we don't have that goal, I don't know what goal we do have. We can reduce, we can reduce, we can reduce, but at the core of just reducing it is the acknowledgement that it will always be with us. I don't share that. I don't share that it should always be with us.

I know it's too late now. I tried my best in committee. I will continue to try my best, if this bill ever comes forward again in the House while I am still here, to change those words, because our goal should be like Quebec's. Quebec has made that their goal—to eliminate poverty. Newfoundland has made that as part of their goal, I believe, to eliminate poverty. Jurisdictions in Europe have put it forward as their goal, to eliminate poverty, but in Ontario we simply want to be the best jurisdiction. I'm sorry, but I disagree.

The second thing was an independent body to review, assess and advise on the progress of poverty reduction to ensure that government is held objectively accountable and is not able to exaggerate progress on poverty reduction. We see that governments from time to time—not necessarily this one—will try to exaggerate what they're

doing. We see in the House from time to time, in other aspects, governments trying to say how much they're doing, and oftentimes people who are very knowledgeable out there in the field and opposition critics think that what is being said is a little bit of an exaggeration, a little bit of hyperbole.

What we were asking for here is someone to hold governments objectively accountable—an independent body. We have independent bodies that hold this government and this Legislature accountable. We have an ombudsperson, we have a commissioner of the environment, we have a commissioner responsible for integrity, and we have a commissioner for privacy. We were hoping that the government might have considered somebody like that, a commissioner responsible for poverty who could come back to the Legislature once a year, who could be independent, at arm's-length and responsible to the Legislature to actually put in front of us what kinds of programs, policies and monies the government had put forward and what effect they were having.

Quite frankly, governments will take credit for all manner of things, whether they have anything to do with them or not. I remember, in this Legislature, listening to members on the other side talking about the numbers of jobs they had created and talking about all manner of things, which I think, really, they had nothing to do with at all. It was the whole cyclical upturn in the economy; jobs were being created. I remember standing here and saying to one of the honourable members, who is now a minister in this government, that I hoped he would be satisfied to stand up and wax so eloquently when jobs started to disappear. And he laughed at me and said that it was not likely to happen. In fact, that is increasingly what we see these days. Governments will talk about the jobs they're creating, as if they had something to do with it, but they won't talk about the jobs that are being lost; they say that's a worldwide phenomenon or somebody else's responsibility or it's not their fault.

So what I was looking for, and what I continue to think is necessary, is to have a commissioner or someone at arm's-length from the government who can dispassionately talk about the government's actions and whether in fact they had taken the necessary actions and whether they'd had the desired effect.

The third thing we asked for was a clause that would require Ontario's laws, policies and practices to be consistent with the principles outlined in the legislation so that all government operations are in alignment with the strategies to reduce poverty. That is what Quebec has done in their legislation, and it is not a difficult thing. I explained to the members of the committee why this should be passed: because it requires every single minister on every single bill to stand up, and it would take only a matter of seconds, to state whether or not there was anything in the bill that would either negatively or positively affect the fight on poverty. I'm given to understand that there are going to be amendments to the Mining Act brought forward. If a minister were to stand up and say, "This probably has no effect one way or the

other," that would take 15 seconds of ministerial time, and probably it would have no effect one way or the other. I'm not privy to what's in the bill yet, but more than likely it wouldn't.

It was suggested during the course of the committee hearings that it was too onerous on ministers to make that statement every time a bill was introduced: whether or not it would be having an effect on poverty. I know in Quebec they must do so and I don't think it costs more than 10 or 15 seconds of time, and it should be before the House, whether or not the bill will have any good effect or bad effect when it comes to reducing poverty. If this is in fact one of the government's signature pieces, and future governments' signature pieces, then it should be spoken to.

The next thing is the recognition that strengthening Ontario's human rights laws and the enforcement system is essential to the reduction of poverty. A public commitment to the rights of all is crucial to reducing poverty. We believe that human rights are akin to the rights of people to get out of poverty. Almost always, those who are living in poverty are to some extent having their rights abused, and we think that the strengthening of rights was something that should have been included, even if it was only a line in the legislation.

Next is a clause requiring targets to represent a substantive reduction in poverty so that governments don't set poverty targets at minimal levels. Although there is a commitment by this government for 25 in 5 for children, and the minister made that statement last year, there is not a minimal standard set in this legislation. We tried to set a minimal standard so that there had to be, as an example, a 3% or 5% or 7% reduction—I leave the numbers—each and every year so that future governments would have a standard which was met. If it could not be met, then they could stand in the House and explain why it could not be met. But you cannot just simply say, "We didn't meet any standard this year," or "This year was a rough year," or "This year, the stock market went down," or "This year, we lost X number of jobs," or "The people are revolting because they think the taxes are too high," or whatever other number of excuses might be made. There should be a standard set, and the standard should be met against that. If the minimum is to be only 3%, which would be a 33-year time frame to eliminate poverty, then let the minimum standard be 3%. In good years it might be 5% or 6% or 7%, and governments, I'm sure, would stand up and say, "We doubled the minimum standard this year," to much applause across all parts of this House. But it was not put in the legislation. I am puzzled to know why. If I were minister, I would have made sure it was.

The next thing is a clause requiring a longer-term, 10-year goal for deeper reductions in poverty instead of only the five-year goal. I know that governments have spoken in part to a 50% reduction over 10 years. I've heard that, not in this bill but in other comments made by government members and members of the cabinet, that a 10-year goal would encompass 50%. I think that should have

been part of the bill, and we tried to make that motion, to no avail.

We also asked for the requirement that ministers review and report on the impacts of new legislation on poverty reduction so that all future legislation supports the fight against poverty instead of undermining it. I think it is quite self-evident that ministers are required to look at their new legislation to make sure that the legislation does not in fact hurt the poverty fight. That would coincide, I think, very closely with ministerial statements to that effect.

1000

The collection of disaggregated data on groups at increased risk of poverty to ensure that progress is made for all Ontarians, particularly those most at risk: It is often difficult for governments to collect data and it is often difficult and problematic for them when it involves things like sex, sexual orientation, people of colour, or that kind of data, because people wonder why it's being collected. I know at the time when I first became a politician in the city of Toronto and other groups were attempting to collect data based on race, there was a hue and cry against it, but we have become much more used to that kind of collection of data and can see that it can be used for the purposes of good as well as for those who are trying to pinpoint blame. We asked that the disaggregated data be collected on those groups at increased risk, but that was not part of the legislation either.

We asked for the creation of an anti-racism directorate and an employment equity directorate to ensure that the poverty strategy strongly addresses discrimination as a cause of poverty, and that did not make it to the bill. We asked for the inclusion of a good job strategy and the inclusion of minimum commitments for social transfers for education, health, child care, housing and income support, and that, too, did not make the bill.

In the end, we asked for a great many things we got and we asked for a great many we did not. I want to reiterate that we are thankful for those things we got because that is an unusual occurrence to us. I wish there could have been more. I will continue to fight for more. My colleagues in the New Democratic party will continue to fight for more. We believe that this bill, should it be passed—and I believe it will be—will set a template, but it is a template upon which we must improve. It is not a bill that can be allowed to stand alone or stagnate or be the end for all time, because it needs to be stronger. It needs to be stronger so that that child who wakes up in the morning in Regent Park, on Jane-Finch or on a reserve in northern Ontario knows that there is hope and that something is going to change. The legislation needs to change in the future so that a person living in disability knows that they're not going to have their money clawed back, and so that a young mother knows that the allowance that is given to her by the federal government is going to safely remain in her pocket over the long term and not be clawed back. It needs to remain there so that someone who is living in poverty on Ontario Works knows that there's going to be sufficient food, and that

the government is trying to react to a healthy food basket in giving enough money on which they can live. It needs to remain there so that people who are desperate for social housing don't have waiting lists of 75,000 families in Toronto alone, trying to get a decent place for themselves and their children to live.

In summary, we believe that the bill remains weaker than it should be. We recognize that poverty reduction acts on their own are not enough. We want to take a look back to the 2009 budget. We waited for the 2009 budget. We knew that this bill was not yet before the House, but we waited on the budget to see some kind of a signal of what this government was going to do around poverty. We waited for a signal in terms of the rates for ODSP. They are not enough. They were \$999 before the budget and they're \$1,020 after the budget. I would ask any of the members in this House to think about living on \$1,020 a month if you are on ODSP; if you were born with Down's syndrome; if you've suffered an industrial accident or some kind of accident that is not covered by workers' compensation; if you have developed a mental illness, have somehow found yourself unable to work and doctors, this Legislature and everyone else say that you are disabled, that you cannot work, and you have \$999 on which to live.

I know, because I go around my riding all the time here in Toronto. I saw an ad, the first one I've seen for a long time, because there are some vacancies, advertising an apartment for \$895. That was the first time I've seen one that low for quite a while. I saw one for \$895. The first thing I thought wasn't, "What a low apartment; what a low cost—\$895;" the first thing I thought was, whoever is on ODSP and is lucky enough to find this cheap apartment is going to have \$100 left—

Mr. Paul Miller: Can't eat.

Mr. Michael Prue: —can't eat, can't take the TTC, can't get a pass, can't get any decent clothes, can't do anything else. But at least, thankfully, somebody was willing to rent them an apartment for that cost.

I looked at that. I think that the government needed to have raised the rates more than they did, and the rates are not effective until November, because this is something else that's done in this Legislature: Each and every time I ask the question, you're raising the rates 2%, and this time is no different. It's 1% now and 1% later. It's not 2% all at once, and it's not 2% when the budget comes in. This year it's 2% in November, so it's halfway through. It's not right away; the people have to wait another six or eight months to actually see the increase, and then what is reflected in the budget at the end of the year is that it's a much smaller expenditure to the government than if it was in the whole year.

Hon. George Smitherman: It's on the anniversary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know it's on the anniversary, but it doesn't have to be.

Hon. George Smitherman: But you're making it like sound like it isn't.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, I'm not making it sound—what I'm also saying is that 2% does nothing more than

tread water. Even in these times when inflation is running at around 2%, the people are no better off in that terrible poverty.

I look back to all of the increases since this government came into effect, and I am thankful that at least there were some increases, because I was here during the Mike Harris years, when there were no increases at all, ever. I can say that in the first year this government came forward with a bit of a poverty agenda because there was a 3% increase, and the next year they forgot all about it because there was a zero. In subsequent years, there has been 2% each year. The net effect of the three-zero-two-two-two is that people are no better off than they were in the Mike Harris era, because all of that has been eaten by inflation; every single bit of it has been eaten by inflation. So more needs to be done.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I see that the minister is indicating to me that she knows more needs to be done.

You cannot allow tens of thousands of people in this province who are disabled, who are on ODSP, to continue in this poverty and in this dilemma, because there is literally nothing they can do; most of them cannot work. But for those of them who can, I also have the dilemma—and I want to talk to you again about the clawback, because I find this morally reprehensible. I'm hoping that the government will listen, not only in terms of this bill but in the budget that will follow next year, so that we can see whether something is being done.

I have given the example many times of a child born with Down's syndrome, but a child can be born with any number of learning disabilities and have difficulty and can end up, sometimes, at the time after we've educated them and done the best job we can, finishing high school and wanting to participate in the economy and the community of this province. We should welcome that; we should say that it's a great thing. I know that when I go into places like McDonald's and see somebody with a learning disability flipping hamburgers or cleaning the tables or doing whatever they can do, when I see young people with a learning disability stacking shelves, when I see them working in factories doing work, it is the best they can do. They are happy to do it and they are happy to belong and they are happy to participate and they are happy for any extra money they can make, because \$999 is not enough. I have some real difficulty when the government chooses to claw back half of what they earn. I have that difficulty because what we are saying to them is that they are going to be living their entire life in poverty, because, until such time as we can give them \$12,000 for being disabled and on ODSP, and the difference to—the poverty level is somewhere around \$20,000 for a single individual in a big metropolitan centre—until they can make \$16,000, not \$8,000, they are going to remain in poverty, and very few of them will ever find the wherewithal to make \$16,000 a year.

1010

What we are saying to them is that they are going to be living in poverty their whole life. I want this minister

to know I don't accept that. I do not accept it now, I do not accept it with this bill, I will not accept it in the next budget. For me, to see a real change, there has to be a rate increase to those who cannot work and an acknowledgment that those who do work and are contributing to our society ought to be allowed to keep that money—and personally, I would allow them to keep the first \$8,000 they make without having any clawed back, so that never again in this province of Ontario, no matter what you do and no matter how hard you work, is being a disabled person tantamount to always living in poverty. We need to hold out that hope, and that hope should be that the first \$8,000 is tax-free.

I would also hold out that hope to some of those who are on Ontario Works. Very often and most often, people on Ontario Works are of two categories: They're women and they're children. That's who they are. They're single mothers trying desperately to look after their children, oftentimes after abuse or abandonment—and I think that we ought to be mindful of that as well. A single person on welfare earns about \$560 a month. In today's Ontario it is certainly not enough for an apartment, it's not enough for food, it's not enough, really, for anything. I don't know how people do that.

We do know—and there was a report out today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—that when the monies do not go up, the use of food banks goes up. I've not seen the report; I just saw a little cut in today's newspaper, explaining that they discovered that. They also discovered, to no one's surprise, that when welfare rates in Ontario were cut by 21%, food bank usage the same year went up by 14%. That should be of no surprise to anyone at all.

I'm looking for the government in the future to take this bill and to use it at budget time to avail, so that people living in poverty can see that the bill is working and that the budget and the cabinet are making sure that it works to the benefit of the poor.

There's also child care. We know that child care is essential, and there was not, really, very much in this budget about child care. I do know the government is willing, now, to spend the money that's being given by the federal government, but I'm waiting for the government to take that next step to start putting its own funding in there.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There's \$50 million.

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister tells me \$50 million, but this is \$50 million on a \$100-billion budget. Think about \$50 million in terms of \$100 billion and what a percentage that is. I have to tell you—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's more.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, it's like half of 1% or less. I'm saying that the government, if they want to reduce poverty for women—and we've now included women and children in here—have to look at this as a poverty reduction measure, because in my view, there is nothing else that will matter more to women than having quality child care, being able to go back to school and being able to go back to work at the earliest possible

times. I certainly know that it has been a key determinant in the province of Quebec, and it can be a key determinant here if we have the will.

There was the housing, I think—I need to mention housing just for a second. There was no additional housing benefit put forward in this last budget. There was some glimmer of hope for additional supportive and assisted housing to be built in Ontario. I'm waiting for the shovels to go into the ground; I'm not sure when that is going to happen. This, too, will be a key determinant in the next budget of whether or not this government is serious about giving this bill effect. Again, there was a government commitment, I will acknowledge, to raise the minimum wage, but we—in our party, anyway—think it's a little too slow. We think that it should have been raised to \$10.25 right now and \$11 in 2011 in order to not only keep up with inflation, but to outpace inflation and to give all of those people, particularly new immigrants, women and young people, who form the bulk of the minimum wage earners, an opportunity to work full-time and escape poverty.

Despite the limitations and despite the fact that it doesn't guarantee action, many anti-poverty groups feel that this legislation is important and we should respect it. I have talked to them. I've talked to 25 in 5, I've talked to the Colour of Poverty, we've talked to all of the groups that made deputations and we've asked them what they think about this bill.

I'm a New Democrat, and I have to tell you I want more, I expect more and I hope for more. I've asked them whether they're satisfied. To a person, all of the groups have said that although they're not 100% satisfied, they believe that this bill should go forward. They believe it will set the template, they believe that in time it can be changed, it can be speeded up, and they want the bill in place, quite frankly, to ensure that this government, in the next round of budget process, puts the money where the mouth is—puts the money on the table to do the things that this bill will require of it, because that's going to be the key.

The key is going to be March of next year. The first report will come out March 31, the budget will come out in March 2010, and the two are going to have to be synced, because if they're not there, then I'm not sure what the purpose of this bill was, at least in terms of this government. Maybe you're trying to encumber future governments. But unless this government moves quickly forward to reduce poverty by a huge amount, and I'm talking in excess of 5% in the next budget, then this whole thing would have been a charade.

Is it time?

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. It now being quarter past, I will stand down and continue on the next occasion.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being past 10:15 of the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1017 until 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I welcome to the chamber SEIU janitors Fida, Renato, Jana, Jimmy, Inessa, Maria, Ignacia, Gajan, Julio, Ritch, Eliana, Steve, Ritch and Raffaele. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ANNIVERSARY OF LEGISLATIVE STAFF

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like all members of the House to join me in congratulating Deb Deller, the Clerk of the House, and Zina Decker, executive assistant to the Clerk of the House, who are today marking 30 years of service at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Health. There is an excellent column by Michele Mandel in today's Toronto Sun, which I'm sure your staff brought to your attention. The column raises serious questions about just how prepared the province is to deal with an epidemic. It mentions the experience of Ontario's first confirmed swine flu cases and how those affected with the confirmed cases were given the green light to carry on normal activities, including perhaps exposing young children at a daycare to the virus.

Minister, your Premier has stated that you have a comprehensive plan to deal with the outbreak of an influenza pandemic. Can you explain why this was allowed to happen?

Hon. David Caplan: The Premier is quite correct: Ontario does have a comprehensive plan, as does every public health unit across the province of Ontario.

First of all, I want to reiterate that I can't comment on the specific case that was raised, but I can give the advice I would want to provide to all Ontarians: Do use good judgment. Do not go into work if you're feeling sick. Do not enter into social situations. Wash your hands; hand hygiene and cleanliness is the absolute most important thing that we can do to prevent the spread of infection. Use proper cough and sneezing etiquette; cough into your sleeve.

In fact, I am confident in Ontario's health network to be able to control, contain and identify the disease. So far, we have done an excellent job—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a very disappointing response. Ontarians deserve to have some answers about the specific issues I'm raising here. I quote the mother of one of the women with a confirmed case, who

operates a home daycare: "If I have one of the few cases of swine flu in the GTA in my house, am I not somebody who should be called and told what to do?" She wants to know: Should she be isolating herself? Should she be keeping her son home from school, her husband from work? No one has told her anything. Tuesday, the Premier stated emphatically, "I just want to assure families that we are on top of this."

Minister, would you tell this concerned mother and the parents of the children in her home daycare that you're on top of this and you will get them some answers? I think they have a right to suspect that you're not on top of this.

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, not only is the Ministry of Health but also the experts who are advising the ministry on top of the swine flu monitoring, containment and control. I can assure the member opposite, as I can all Ontarians, that medical experts are telling us and providing us with the proper steps to take to identify, contain and control the outbreak of this particular influenza strain.

I want the member to understand that it's very important that we all work in a coordinated fashion and that we all use the very best judgment and follow the guidelines that have been set out. For example, we've set up a special ServiceOntario info line: 1-800-476-9708. We want to make sure that Ontarians get the right information, good information about what they can do. One of the concerns that I will speak of in the final supplementary is about the fact that in the blogosphere, through Twitter and Facebook, people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't know if you're hearing any guidance for that mother; I'm certainly not. Once again, I want to remind the minister that the Premier stated there is a comprehensive plan in place—those are his exact words—as well as adding that he will ensure that public health units have all the resources they need to do the job.

Some time ago, your predecessor, the Deputy Premier, referring to communities not having the resources necessary for public health programs, beat his chest and said, "That's a situation that is intolerable, and it will not be tolerated under our government."

Minister, if that's truly the case, why does this incident leave so many unanswered questions? Why have children at a daycare been threatened with exposure to this virus? How could this happen?

Hon. David Caplan: Resources for public health, after regrettably having been cut for many years or down-loaded by the New Democrats, have doubled. I understand members have a difficult time understanding, as we have heard from previous chief medical officers of health, that previous governments have turned their back on public health. That has not been the case with this government and with the actions we have taken. In fact, we are providing not only the resources but the advice and guidance from medical experts about what needs to

be done. There is the communication, there is the coordination, there is the control and the identification that is going to be necessary, and partners are working well together.

One of the real challenges we do have is that Ontarians get their information from a lot of different sources. We want to make sure they are getting the right information from the right sources. That's why the ministry has enhanced the information on its website—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Minister of Health: It's unfortunate that, unlike his Premier who talks about the appropriate tone in a crisis, he continues to play the political blame game with every opportunity.

The acting chief medical officer of health recently issued a health notice for all health care professionals. It said that patients who may have been exposed to the swine flu virus should practise social distancing—not going out in public. Yet, the lady in question and her friends, who went straight to the hospital after returning from Mexico, were tested for the virus, then sent home with no instructions to ensure they weren't exposing others to the virus. Clearly, that message isn't getting through. You are creating holes in your pandemic plan. They're causing potential risks to Ontarians and their children. How can you reassure Ontarians that they will get the vital information they need, when they need it, and not unwittingly expose others to the virus?

Hon. David Caplan: The only one playing the blame game here is the member opposite. In fact, medical experts are telling us that we are in a much better position today than we ever have been in the history of our province. Dr. Donald Low, for example, says, "There has been a big shift. We really have come a long way. We had no way to respond to this six years ago. We didn't have the infrastructure, we didn't have the expertise, we didn't have the communications. Those are all there now. We are doing a much better job. It's good to see that that investment is paying off when we have a crisis like this."

I think that the member should act responsibly and provide the kind of facts and information—listen to medical experts like Dr. Donald Low, who has stepped up to the plate and has been a leader in this province both six years ago during SARS and today. I can assure this member that all information is being provided to medical—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess it's wonderful to have plans, but whether they're utilized and implemented is another question, which this incident certainly raises questions about. I would refer to—he has referred to it as well—the Ontario health plan for an influenza pandemic, issued in August of last year. It's not new to the minister. It talks about public health measures in a pandemic alert

period, which I would say we are in, and specifically states that individuals experiencing flu symptoms should be given clear, consistent and accurate information. That includes staying away from daycares, school, work or large public events. That's what your pandemic plan calls for, Minister. Yet these ladies were sent home with no instructions and they spent the weekend doing the very things your plan says not to do.

Is this evidence of how you are implementing this pandemic plan so far? Is this what Ontarians can expect to see from you in the future?

1040

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, we not only have a very good and comprehensive plan, but it is being acted upon. It is being coordinated by medical experts and in public health units around the province of Ontario. It does require Ontarians to use good judgment, and that would be the advice I would have for all Ontarians: Stay out of social situations; don't go to work if you're feeling sick; don't put others at risk; cough and sneeze into your sleeve to decrease the spread of infection and disease; proper hand hygiene. These are the kinds of things that Ontarians can and should do, using good common sense to make sure that the spread of disease and infection is not kept up. Medical professionals and public health units across the province of Ontario are arming Ontarians with the right information, I know, as well as beefed-up resources from the Ministry of Health and from—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You have to wonder if the minister has actually read the plan. I can forward you the link to your website if that would be helpful. It's right there. One of your top infectious disease advisers, Dr. Donald Low, whom you often refer to, clearly stated that it's too late to contain the disease and efforts have turned to mitigating the damage.

I'd like to quote the Premier from just yesterday, when I questioned him on this same matter of emergency preparedness. He said, let's "be honest as well." That's what he was telling the people of Ontario.

With that in mind, and based on what has transpired over the past few days, do you feel 100% certain that you're doing what Dr. Low has recommended? Do you feel you are mitigating the damage?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, Dr. Low has commented: "It is a pleasure to see the response and infrastructure put in place." But it's not just Dr. Low. Other medical professionals—Dr. Allison McGeer, director of infection control at Mount Sinai Hospital: "We should be celebrating the level of transparency of communication.... This is an excellent marker for how things have gotten better since SARS in terms of us of being able to coordinate things internationally...." Dr. Robin Williams, chief medical officer of health, Niagara Region Public Health Department: "I think we are best prepared as we could be for whatever that storm is going to look like here.... We have surveillance now. Five or six years ago, we wouldn't have even realized this was happening." Vicki Hawks-

worth, Lambton county, supervisor of environmental health and prevention services: "We have an excellent surveillance system in Ontario and they are on it."

Medical experts agree: Not only do we have a plan, but Ontario has taken the appropriate steps to protect—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The US and Canadian governments are going to be providing more than \$15 billion in financing to Chrysler to keep it operating through bankruptcy protection. News reports suggest that the federal and Ontario governments are going to be providing about \$3 billion of the \$15 billion.

My question is this: With well over 20% of Chrysler production located in Ontario and with Canadian governments providing 20% of the emergency financing, will the Premier and his friend Stephen Harper ensure that Canadians and Ontarians hold at least a 20% equity stake in the restructured company?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I appreciate the question from the member. The member did refer to 20% production—the 20% footprint of Chrysler in Ontario. I can say that the Premier is looking forward to, this afternoon, talking about the future of Chrysler in the province of Ontario, and that is very good news indeed.

Obviously, the member is asking important questions about the details, about control, about the agreement, about equity. Of course, the Premier and the Prime Minister are looking forward to providing all the details about the Ontario agreement, and the President is going to be announcing something at around noon with respect to the US agreement. I look forward to answering all the members' questions at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Toronto Star is reporting that the federal and Ontario governments will jointly own 2% equity in a restructured Chrysler. Guess what? We're now very clearly seeing the negotiating power of the Ontario government—2% for billions of dollars of investment. This investment is supposed to keep jobs in Ontario and keep our economy healthy, but the Premier cannot enforce those terms because he only has a one-fiftieth stake at the table. A 2% stake in Chrysler, is that all the negotiating power Ontarians can expect for their multi-billion-dollar investment?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member is raising the issue of the investment or loans that the government of Ontario is making and what it gets for that. That can be achieved in a number of different ways. The way in which governments typically achieve that is through an agreement, a contract or a loan agreement.

A government taking an equity stake in a company is something that President Obama said this week is not ideally what government wants to be doing, but it takes

place on a temporary level and then, in his words, the goal is the government gets out of the business of building cars and Chrysler starts creating the cars that consumers want. That is exactly Canada's position and Ontario's position. We want Chrysler to get back to the business of creating cars that consumers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister would know that the way to make sure your agreements are upheld is if you have a stake at the table. The frightening thing is that the Chrysler package may well be the template for the much larger GM restructuring. Once again, this government is signing a blank cheque and, with GM, a much bigger blank cheque down the road, without requiring any accountability whatsoever.

Twenty per cent of the financing is coming from Canada. Well over 20% of the production is located in Ontario. Why doesn't this government insist that Canadians hold at least a 20% equity stake in the restructured Chrysler?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The news of Chrysler's future has not been announced and the NDP is already opposed to the future that we're putting in place.

I'm sure the member knows, or certainly ought to know, that an equity stake is not the same as having a seat at the table, to use her words. I think what the member is looking for is some level of oversight, some assurance that in fact what Ontario is doing and the contribution it is making is yielding results, and I can assure the member that is exactly what is taking place.

I also remind the member that the Canadian Auto Workers wanted no equity stake. They didn't want any equity stake in the company. They weren't looking for that kind of a return on investment. They wanted to make sure there was something there for the workers, and we want to make sure there's something there for the workers. I don't understand why the New Democratic Party would—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. The city of Toronto has been planning to purchase new streetcars for quite some time now. They've made it clear in council resolutions, in meetings with the government and in public statements, yet this minister claims to have been blindsided by the city's request for provincial support for new made-in-Ontario streetcars.

Why is this minister putting his own narrow political interest ahead of good jobs at Bombardier for workers in Thunder Bay and badly needed transportation improvements for Toronto commuters?

Hon. George Smitherman: We say again that it's noteworthy that today's NDP is back in favour of public transit in Toronto and back in favour of the workers at Bombardier.

The honourable member doesn't understand the nature of the question at all. There's no question whatsoever that the city of Toronto has been speaking about the replacement of streetcars, and everybody agrees that it's an important project and that it's much necessary. The issues at hand have to do with the fact that the city of Toronto, in private conversations and otherwise, has also been examining a wide array of other priorities and it's getting very difficult to be able to meet all of those needs.

What we've sought to ask of the city of Toronto is that before it announces contracts, it should not do that without ensuring that the necessary resources are in hand and that the parties that are expected to pay for the contracts have agreed to do that, signed off and identified all necessary resources. We think it's—

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: John Barber in the Globe and Mail says that this minister's comments are "rankly disingenuous complaints," and I would agree with the assessment of Mr. Barber.

New streetcars will improve public transit for more than three million Ontarians. They will ensure the jobs of hundreds of workers in Thunder Bay, and they're going to get more people out of their cars, helping Ontario meet our climate change obligations. Any way you look at it, it's a win-win proposition.

My question is this: Why is the government, and this minister specifically, playing political games? Does he support public transit or does he not?

Hon. George Smitherman: We have it on the record from that party. They referred to the expansion of the subway line to York region as the sparsely populated York region. So if there's any question about which party supports public transit, it's the government here that's done it.

Ask the city of Toronto this for yourself—why, just yesterday, in the transit newspaper, they put out an ad: "Thank you, Ontario. We're breaking ground for Transit City thanks to the recent investments from Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario government's MoveOntario 2020 initiative."

There has been less doubt now than any time in a number of decades here in the city of Toronto that this government, the McGuinty government, is committed to public transit. We welcome the honourable member to support that policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the minister should talk to his member from the Thunder Bay area, who actually commented a couple of days ago himself that in fact Bombardier was going to get this contract. You should be talking to him.

John Barber again, in the Globe and Mail: He says that if this minister didn't know about Toronto's bid—Mr. Mauro certainly did—for new streetcars, he should have known. And if he's pretending that he didn't know, then

he is playing politics with an issue of crucial importance to Bombardier workers in Thunder Bay, who are desperately clinging to jobs, to millions of commuters who need a convenient, modern public transit alternative, and to future generations who will suffer the consequences if we fail to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the province.

Given what is at stake—the things that I've just laid out—when will this minister stop posturing and start working with the city of Toronto to create jobs, to provide better public transit and to help the environment?

Hon. George Smitherman: I ask the honourable member, where is the sensitivity for the workers at Bombardier and the community of Thunder Bay when a party stands and says that they are entering into a contract for which they have clearly not identified all necessary financial resources, not just from our government but from the government of Canada? No one is pretending—and I am not pretending—that we have not heard about the streetcar initiative; everybody agrees with that. The point is that my city, which I love very much and which our government has supported very greatly, has a wide array of priorities. On February 22, in a meeting with the mayor, he told me that his priorities were the Sheppard LRT and Union Station. Now on a subsequent day, we've seen this initiative related to streetcars.

We simply ask of the city of Toronto, focus in on your top priorities. We will work with the government of Canada and do our very best to support them, like their very own ad has already thanked—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, you insist that your Bill 150, disguised in the colour green, will have virtually no effect on energy prices. No one believes you. You offer only empty rhetoric and bluster to back up your claim. We, on the other hand, have provided a third party analysis by the universally respected London Economics International, first by way of an executive summary and, later today, by way of a full report. Their analysis clearly shows that your position is nothing but a fairy tale, that households could see their electricity bills rise by \$1,200 per year by the time you're done—and that doesn't include the 8% Dalton sales tax.

Minister, it's time to level with the people. What will your deal with Liberal developers really cost?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to say to the honourable member that we noticed that when they released their executive summary, they did it before question period and in the media studio. We noticed that today, they're going to release their executive summary after question period has ended and there's no public opportunity for that exposure. We wonder what you have to hide. Furthermore, we wonder if you can release the cost of public expenditure related to the development of that report that you ordered and that they authored.

On the issue of opportunity related to the Green Energy Act, I quote Mayor Percy Bresnahan from the township of South Algonquin, from the member's own riding, who came here to Toronto to say, "Now that the provincial government is interested in burning wood or wood pellets to produce hydro—and I'm hoping that's one way that they do go—I do think that our township can provide for green energy by providing biomass. Looking into biomass we could possibly create another 200 jobs within our township"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think you'll find Percy Bresnahan is any fan of you, Mr. Minister—and we'll have a question period Monday. Don't worry about that.

Minister, unlike you, London Economics backs their words with facts, not fantasy. They used data provided by the Ontario Power Authority, a creation of your government. Unlike you, they're not making it up.

No one at public hearings agreed with your dream around the cost of your personal power grab. Many presenters, such as the Consumers Council of Canada and the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association, expressed grave concerns about the effect of your Bill 150. They say that it will cost families and lead to job losses. Minister, will you give Ontario's hard-working families and manufacturers the real cost? They deserve nothing less than that.

I invite you to come to the press conference, Mr. Minister. Once you've had a chance to see the truth, maybe you'll try telling the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the last comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do think it noteworthy for all members of this House to recognize that for that honourable member to see the truth in his terms, he's got to contract for its preparation. He had to order the very report that he now relies upon and refuses to release, even though he wants to talk about it today.

One thing that we noticed about their first go-round was that they gave no credit to the opportunity for conservation and for a reduction in overall energy use. I do say to that honourable member, who offered personal testimony on the day the bill was introduced about his family's ability to reduce their energy use by 40%, when you factor in the capacity to use less electricity, this further reduces the impact on any hydro bills. We all know that that member's policy in support of coal and coal sequestration also lives today, without a price tag at all.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

This morning, in the Toronto Sun, there is a very disturbing article. On Thursday of last week, a press con-

ference was held here at Queen's Park and we were assured that health care officials were being informed about the proper procedures for handling potential swine flu cases. But on Friday, three young women who were feeling unwell and had just returned from a trip to Mexico went to their local hospital—the right thing to do. They were administered tests—the right thing to do—but they were released from hospital and given no advice on how to minimize risk to others.

Can the minister tell us if he feels reassured that all is well with Ontario's plan when he reads stories like this one?

Hon. David Caplan: While the member knows I can't comment on a specific case, I can tell the member that I have tremendous confidence in the health care professionals of this province. I have confidence in the medical experts who are providing the advice and guidance to Ontarians in this province. I hope that the member opposite too has confidence in the health care network and the health care professionals in this province to provide good information to Ontarians and to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians, because I know that they are dedicated and incredible professionals who are doing a job to provide that protection.

I can tell you that the government has taken tremendous effort to be able to provide that kind of information to health care professionals about the kind of advice and guidance to give to Ontarians, and it is, specifically, these: When are you feeling sick, stay home; don't go into a social situation. When you are coughing or sneezing, use proper etiquette, into the sleeve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The question was not answered, and if a story like this gives the minister confidence, I'm afraid that his feelings are not shared by a lot of people in Ontario.

Again, according to the story, one of the women confirmed to be carrying the swine flu virus informed health officials that her mother ran a daycare in her house. Yet health officials did not issue warnings, did not ask that the daycare be closed or relocated and did not notify parents of the possibility of contamination, as should have been done.

Minister, does this troubling story raise alarm bells with you? It does with many Ontarians. I want to know, does your ministry have a contingency plan?

1100

Hon. David Caplan: I would say that the Ministry of Health has a comprehensive plan, as has been identified by medical experts in the province. In fact, the information that we are receiving from health care professionals is that all of the public health units have similar kinds of plans in place to be able to coordinate the response, to identify what the threats are, to be able to contain them and to be able to control them. I have tremendous confidence in those medical professionals and in public health units right across this province to be able to protect the interests and protect the health of Ontarians. I hope the

member shares that confidence and shares the thanks that we should all have toward the work that those individuals do.

That's why we have put in enhanced resources. That's why, for example, emergency management centres are on 24-hour surveillance. That's why the coordination has gone out. That's why we've set up ServiceOntario to be able—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, as you're aware, almost 250,000 newcomers come to Canada every year, and about half of them choose Ontario. These newcomers add to Ontario's cultural mosaic, they enrich us with their language and culture, and they come with skills. Yet we know that it can be difficult for newcomers to find employment in their fields. In fact, just yesterday, a report was published by the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians. It discusses the barriers that newcomers, educated and skilled in their trades, face when seeking employment here in Canada.

I have been hearing about the issues first-hand. Recently, I met with trade union leaders who told me that they're seeing a shortage of skilled labour. I've also heard from many newcomers in Mississauga South who would like to put their knowledge and training to work in Ontario.

Minister, is the government aware of the issues faced by newcomers seeking employment in their fields, and what is the government doing to facilitate the process?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga South for the question.

The McGuinty government is proud of its historic role welcoming newcomers and helping them on the road to success. We, the government, understand the importance of immigration to Ontario's future economic growth. According to the Conference Board of Canada, by 2011, 100%—100%—of Canada's net labour force growth will come from immigration.

Since 2003, our government has invested more than \$85 million in 145 bridge training programs to help over 20,000 newcomers to get the training they need to find a job in their field. Currently, my ministry invests in the Trades Win Support project, which helped 84 internationally trained tradespeople obtain certification.

The McGuinty government understands that when newcomers succeed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: In addition to outlining the concerns of foreign-trained workers, the report also highlights the need for more skilled tradespeople in Ontario and across Canada. The report references the study by the Conference Board of Canada. They found that by 2020, Canada could be short one million skilled workers due to

declining birth rates and an aging population. In addition, the report includes findings from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that say that one third of all jobs in Canada require a skilled-trade designation or a college diploma.

There's no doubt that Ontario is facing some very challenging economic times, but we cannot lose sight of the future. Ontario's competitive advantage depends on us having the skill and talent necessary to compete in the global marketplace. It's imperative that we make the necessary investments today to ensure that Ontario emerges from this downturn stronger than ever.

My question is, how are we going to ensure that Ontario has the skilled workers necessary to build manufacturing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: I'll refer it to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: The member raises a very important point about ensuring that Ontario has a supply of skilled trades. One area that we've particularly focused on is the area of apprenticeships, and I'm very pleased to say that we have 60,000 more apprentices in this province than when we took office, 120,000 in total. The most recent budget contained a package of \$750 million to focus on skilled trades, including apprenticeships here in Ontario, and literacy and a whole range of services.

Also, members may be aware that it's my intention to bring forward legislation shortly to establish a college of trades, a self-regulatory body, to look at the whole issue of skilled trades in this province, including, to refer to the member's earlier question, barriers to foreign trade workers who are looking to enter—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

SMOKING CESSATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a question to the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, according to this morning's Hamilton Spectator, smoking has risen by more than one third in one year in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN, which also includes Burlington. Officials in Cancer Care Ontario indicate that these numbers are cause for alarm. Minister, could you tell us why there would be a 33% increase in the number of smokers in an area with a population of about one million people? That's up 33% in a population akin to the province of Saskatchewan, for example.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for the question, and I would like to advise the member opposite that this government continues to work to reduce smoking in the province of Ontario. We have the most comprehensive anti-smoking legislation in North America, and we continue to work. In fact, Health Canada's tobacco use monitoring survey shows that smoking is down overall in Ontario, down 6% among those aged 15 or older: from 23% in 1999 to 17% in 2008. It's down 12% among those aged 15 to 19, from 25% in 1999 to 12% in 2008. It's down 7% among those aged 20 to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, time and again, members on this side of the House have indicated that your statistics are phony. This morning's report indicates that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask that you withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw—perhaps “not statistically accurate.” This morning's report indicates that; a report of a 33% increase in smoking. You talk about your programs. You've spent \$13 million on smoke-free Ontario and \$7 million on cessation ads. These campaigns aren't working and they won't work until you admit that smokers are getting cheap cigarettes from smoke shacks in Brant county, Six Nations, and on government land outside of Caledonia. Minister, what is your plan to get rid of the cheap illegal tobacco that is available without proof of age to young people across—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'm going to refer that question to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me tell that member that on the eve of the police memorial celebration he chooses to demean the work of police services across Ontario and across Canada. He should be ashamed of himself. I am very, very proud of the work of the municipal police services, the OPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister of Transport.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We on this side of the House continue to be very proud of the work our police officers are doing. In 2008, the seizure of contraband cigarettes was up by 46% over 2007, and the trend continues this year. Our police officers are doing their job. They're doing it very, very well, and the member across the way and those members on the other side should be supporting our police officers.

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you know that we generally do not—

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a point of order: If anybody in this House is pro-police and particularly pro-OPP—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Parkdale-High Park.

1110

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On Tuesday, I joined cleaning workers at a rally asking for the Ministry of Labour to help them by investigating allegations of violations of the Employment Standards Act by Impact Cleaning Services. Many companies like Impact Cleaning run subcontracting schemes

that deny workers the basic protections of the Employment Standards Act. Is the Ministry of Labour housed in a building using subcontracted labour, which is denying workers their rights?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to welcome the SEIU janitors who are here with us today as our guests in the Legislature. I want to commend them for the hard work they do for us every single day. You're in our building and our offices long before we arrive. You're there after we leave. You help our workday work that much better.

I also want to say that the Ministry of Labour is there to support you. If you feel that you have been unjustly treated, I ask that you contact the Ministry of Labour through the SEIU. I do know that you have a collective agreement. A grievance should be made on your behalf so that that issue can be dealt with. I do want to thank you for all the great work that you do for all of us here and at the Ministry of Labour.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member to speak through the Speaker.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The fact is, many government buildings are cleaned by janitors caught up by these subcontracting schemes. Janitors have complained to the Ministry of Labour with absolutely no response. One gentleman has had to sue Impact Cleaning just to get paid the \$23,000 overtime he is owed. Talk to them, Minister of Labour.

As an employer, why won't the province sign the Responsible Property Services Code, a code developed by industry stakeholders to ensure contractors play by the rules and stop abusing workers? Why won't you sign it, Peter? Why won't you sign it?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member that we take employment standards in this province very seriously. The member brings up a specific case. I can't comment on specifics, but what I can tell the member is that in June 2008, the SEIU wrote to the ministry to identify any specific workplace locations for investigation. The Ministry of Labour responded in July 2008 and provided the contact number for the program manager in our central region, who did not receive any calls from the SEIU—did not receive any calls.

But, again, should any of those workers feel they've been unjustly treated, I ask that they put forward a grievance through their collective agreement. That's what they should do. We are there to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. It has been noted that many sectors of the economy in this province have been facing challenges outside of their control. The tourism industry is not immune to these challenges. We are entering the summer festival season and many organizations across the province are busy planning their festivals and all of their events. These

are organizations whose events I know to be significant drivers of the local economy, like our Retrofest, Gregor's Crossing Medieval Faire, Tilbury Fun Fest and the Rotary Ribfest.

I know that the ministry of tourism has programs that are available to local festivals and events throughout the province, including the Celebrate Ontario program. Can the minister outline for the members of this House how important the Celebrate Ontario program is to local festivals and events throughout our province?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to thank the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex. I had the opportunity to be down in Blenheim last week and actually had a chat with the mayor about RetroFest and how excited they are.

As all of the members in the House know, we are privileged to have a great many festivals and events—2,500, in fact—across the province. Our government recognizes these festivals and events as important economic drivers for all of our local communities in attracting tourists and increasing spending in our local economies.

That's why in 2006 our government initiated the Celebrate Ontario program, and we entrenched it in our programs in the 2008 budget, providing it with ongoing stable funding.

In November 2008, we announced \$9 million for the 2009 Celebrate Ontario. But I was pleased just last month to be able to announce in Ottawa that we are in fact investing \$11 million in 224 festivals and events across the province. This is more than double the number of events that were funded last year. We're very excited about the prospects across the province for the exciting festivals and events that are coming up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Pat Hoy: The minister has mentioned that the province is home to so many festivals and events, and that they play an important role in enhancing local economies, attracting more tourists and increasing tourism spending. It's good to hear that the minister announced an additional \$2 million for this program, given the state of the current economy. This will provide further aid to the tourism industry.

Can the minister tell this House about the success of festivals and events last year, which had a significant impact on local economies?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm very pleased to note that of the 224 festivals and events that we're supporting this year, four are in our aboriginal community. We have Bob Goulais here, executive assistant to Grand Chief John Beaucage, who's in the House today, and I wanted to acknowledge his presence.

We had some incredible success last year with Celebrate Ontario 2008. The Elora Festival, which is in the riding of my critic, the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, attracted sellout crowds for the world-renowned opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, with overall sales of their whole concert series up by 25%.

In the Lanark district, the Lanark Highlands' Art of Being Green Festival saw attendance up 64% last year

with the additional funding that allowed them to expand their festival. Just about every bed and breakfast within half an hour of the venue was occupied during that July weekend.

There are a variety of success stories across the province, and I look forward to getting out to many festivals—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services: Two days ago the member for Hamilton Mountain said, and I quote, “At TICO’s 2008 annual general meeting, some member raised concerns regarding TICO’s handling of One Step’s closure. The TICO board directors then decided to commission a third party review of how TICO handled the specific closure of One Step Travel.”

That’s a far cry from what former TICO board members Bruce Bishins and Simon Perry recall and what’s reported in the Canadian Travel Press. In March, CTP said, and I quote: “The acrimonious meeting eventually saw a registrant-driven vote on a public inquiry, a vote that passed 39 to 28 despite TICO’s assertion it had no jurisdiction.”

What are you and TICO hiding about the handling of One Step and how it could have prevented the collapse of Conquest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Which one, sir?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): “Hiding.”

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hiding? Okay. I withdraw that, but I still expect an answer to the question.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I have said it a few times in the House already. Our first priority is to protect consumers, and I expect TICO to protect consumers whenever a travel agency gets into financial trouble or goes down. That’s exactly what happened in this event as well.

I’m sure that these issues were raised in the annual general meeting last year. The board of directors of TICO handled the situation, and they have asked for an inquiry into this issue. Whenever we get the recommendations, if those recommendations make some sense to improve the workings of TICO, then we will definitely look into it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister should get his story straight because this looks like a cover-up. TICO first—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker, but this does look a little suspicious. TICO first ignored the registrants and then they arranged for a third party commission on One Step when they acknowledged, and they had knowledge of Conquest’s cash flow troubles. You and your appointees on TICO have a lot to answer for, including removing a TICO board member who disagreed with you.

1120

One Step collapsed in 2006. In June 2008, the court transcripts are made public, admonishing TICO for its work in this case. It was also around this same time that Conquest started having cash flow troubles.

What are you telling this House, Minister? Why are you trying to dupe the consumers whom you are sitting in that chair to protect? Will you make the third party review public—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this again for the record of the House: Our first priority is always going to be the consumers. We are always going to make sure that the consumers come first. If the travel agency goes down and they are stranded anywhere, then we will bring them home.

Let me tell the member on the other side: There are a lot of other organizations which will differ from what the member has said. I’m going to quote the chair of the Canadian Association of Tour Operators: “The media and politicians seem to have overlooked TICO’s excellent track record....”

“TICO has overseen the industry for 12 years and there have been very few failures in the industry.... This is because TICO works with registrants to keep them onside with their financial requirements under the Travel [Industry] Act, or it has closed companies in an orderly fashion, with the least disruption possible.” That’s exactly what we believe, and that’s exactly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. As we speak, the pensions of tens of thousands of hard-working Ontarians are hanging in the balance. Pensions are in danger at Chrysler, GM, AbitibiBowater, Nortel, steel companies and all the smaller companies across Ontario.

How can this government introduce legislation that absolves the province of any legal obligation whatsoever to ensure that pensioners get every last pension penny owed to them?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We continue to work with FSCO with those plans that are affected, to help protect pensions. For instance, when Stelco got into difficulty some three years ago—

Hon. Jim Watson: Too big to fail.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It was a too-big-to-fail pension; that’s absolutely right. It was the NDP who set that up. And when we stepped in to save that pension, you and your party voted against it—that member.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d just remind the honourable member that he asked the question. It would be good for him to listen to the answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He doesn't want to hear the answer, because not only did they create the "too big to fail" clause, but when they had a chance to support Stelco workers in Hamilton, they voted against it. When they had a chance to help Chrysler workers in Windsor, they said no. When they had the chance to stand up for General Motors and keep production and pensions in Ontario, they said no.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: People who work hard all their lives defer their earnings to a pension plan. The least they should expect is that when it comes to the end of their working days, they can count on the retirement income that they put away over decades. And yet, unbelievably, we apparently have a company called AbitibiBowater going to court to suspend pension payments towards its unfunded liabilities for workers. We have a government that is trying to deflect the blame to the federal government when in fact, Minister, the majority of the responsibility falls on your shoulders.

How can this government bring forward a resolution today—today, Minister—to deflect the responsibility for pensions when so many thousands of pensioners are in jeopardy right here in Ontario?

As far as the Stelco thing goes, I lived it; I was there; and one of their CEOs walked away with \$60 million.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario reject the tired old rhetoric of that member and his party. It's tired and it's old and it's just not completely candid, and it certainly doesn't reflect reality.

Government after government in this province have continued to deny the challenges facing our pension system and, by extension, pensioners. This government, for the first time, is beginning to address those challenging questions.

We reject "too big to fail." It didn't work. Every one of the too-big-to-fail—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please listen to the response. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He doesn't want to listen to the answer, and he's certainly not listening to pensioners in Ontario who want their government to address this challenging issue openly, recognizing the need to protect the interest of pensioners in Ontario.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, we can all agree that keeping Ontario roads safe is a priority for this government. It is important to those who use our roads to feel secure about driving with family, friends and loved ones through their daily routine. That is why our government has moved forward with a variety of initiatives to improve the safety of Ontario's roads, including, four years ago, making the use of booster seats mandatory to protect our youngest and most vulnerable passengers.

In 2006, a one person, one seatbelt law required that every person in a vehicle must buckle up, and Ontario

now has the toughest penalties in Canada for street racing, contest and stunt driving on our roads.

I understand the records have been recently recognized, and I was hoping that Minister of Transportation could please share with this House details on this record and achievement.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question. Yesterday, I was pleased to accept an award, on behalf of this government and the Ministry of Transportation, from the Ontario Safety League. It was given in recognition of Ontario achieving its lowest fatality rate since 1931, making Ontario's road safety ranking number one of all jurisdictions in North America.

This award is a symbol of the collective road safety achievements, and I want to thank everyone for doing their part to keep Ontarians safe, from successive governments who took action when they were in government to our road safety partners, police partners and the general public.

The latest statistics show that traffic fatality rates in the province dropped nearly 60% in the last quarter century. At the same time, the number of drivers has gone up 70%—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm pleased to see Ontario once again leading the pack with respect to road safety, but even though we have the safest roads on the continent, we cannot stop there. I know that this government is doing a lot to make our roads safe. For example, I understand that we are getting even tougher on drinking and driving by introducing escalating sanctions for those caught driving with blood alcohol concentrations in the warn range.

I also know that there is a lot more that can be done. I hear from my constituency constantly with the question: How is this government working to make our roads safer? I'm hoping the minister can please share with this House how he is ensuring road safety remains a priority and what some of this government's newest initiatives are.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, the member is correct; there's always more we can do when it comes to highway safety. Every day, two people are killed and 10 more are seriously injured on Ontario's roads. That's completely unacceptable. That is why we are constantly working with our police and road safety partners on how to make our roads even safer. The message is clear: More work needs to be done.

We continue our work to keep our roads safe. With unanimous support from this Legislature, we recently passed two pieces of legislation that aim at making our roads safer: Bill 118, the Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, addresses handheld electronic distractions, to help prevent injury and reduce collisions; and Bill 126, the Road Safety Act, is a comprehensive piece of legislation targeting some of the most persistent and dangerous behaviours on the road.

I commend all members of the Legislature for supporting this government legislation and for being part of making Ontario's roads the safest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, your government still has not dealt with the fundamental problems in Ontario's apprenticeship program. In my area, the plumbing profession is in desperate need of apprentices, but your rules and regulations are making it nearly impossible for them.

For instance, Bay Area Electrical and plumbing has brought to my attention that although they have three licensed plumbers, they can only sign on one apprentice. If they want to sign on another apprentice, they need to get a fourth plumbing licence. This is ridiculous. Ontario should have a one-to-one ratio like the rest of the country.

Minister, we've been asking you this same question for months. Why are you making it so hard for businesses to train apprentices in this province?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the honourable member for the question. It gives me an opportunity again to talk about the fact that we have 60,000 more apprentices in the province of Ontario than when we took office. I think the honourable member is aware that, at present, ratios are established on the best advice from industry committees, which are made up of representatives, apprentices, employers and employees.

At the same time, he may also be aware of the extensive consultations that have been undertaken by Kevin Whitaker, the chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, around the idea of setting up a college of trades, a self-regulatory body which would work with all stakeholders in the trades and address a number of issues, including ratios, to ensure that they are properly reviewed and can come forward with the best advice possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, you would think after this question being asked so many times, you would have an actual answer. Apprenticeship ratios need your immediate attention. As minister, you must know that less than half of Ontario apprentices actually complete the training and get certified—less than half, 48%, the lowest in Canada. Why haven't you done anything about this? You should be making it easier for people to acquire the skills to become plumbers and electricians.

Will you commit to changing the ratios to make it easier for small plumbing and electrical businesses to train apprentices? Will you implement a one-to-one ratio in Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we changed ratios based on the best advice that we get from the industry. I'd like to point out to the member that under our watch, we've changed ratios for brick and stone masons, architectural glass and metal mechanics, iron workers, structural and ornamental technicians, and sprinkler and fire protection installers. When the Conservatives were in power, they did not change a single ratio. Zero is their record on that front.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1132 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It's my pleasure to introduce four of Ontario's finest. Larry Molyneaux is the president of the Police Association of Ontario. Jim Christie is the vice-president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. He's also the president of the memorial foundation. Ron Middel is the chief administrative officer for the Police Association of Ontario. Mike Abbott is with the Toronto Police Service. Thank you so much for being here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HAYWARD GORDON LTD.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The McGuinty Liberal government is asleep at the switch while a company in my riding is in real trouble. Hayward Gordon Ltd., located in the town of Halton Hills, is a maker and supplier of pumping and mixing equipment for municipal water and waste water treatment plants. Until recently, 75% of its pumps have been sold into the US market. But today these exports, 75 good jobs and the company's future are all at risk because of a protectionist United States Congress and its new buy-American laws. This hardly seems like free trade.

Mr. John Hayward, the company's president, has been in frequent touch with me since the beginning of March. He has written the Premier many times, seeking the help of the provincial government, as have I. I also spoke directly to the Minister of Economic Development on March 12. In response, to put it mildly, we have been given the brush-off.

John Hayward says that while he appreciates my efforts on his behalf, he's very disappointed with the lack of leadership and action from the provincial government. Mr. Hayward says, "Ontario is utterly absent from the issue and is not at all engaged in protecting the interests of its companies affected by US protectionism."

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters are joining municipalities, including the town of Halton Hills, to urge this government to get engaged and see what can be done to help. Let's hope Premier McGuinty will do just that before even more good jobs are lost through his lackadaisical approach to leadership.

HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in the House today to salute two outstanding Ontario Hockey League champions: the Brampton Battalion for having become the

eastern conference champions, and the Windsor Spitfires for having won the western conference crown.

Last night, the teams began their quest for the title in Windsor, playing the best of seven games. We lulled them into a false sense of security by letting them win. Game 2 is Friday at the Brampton Powerade Centre.

This is the first championship series in the troops' 11-year history, so we're hungry for victory.

While in sport it is never wise to be overconfident, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that while the Spitfires have been strong all season, the Battalion players are a team that just can't be beaten.

This upcoming series will put the pride of the players of the Spitfires and the Battalion on the line, and I would argue that here in the House, members should follow suit. Therefore, I urge my colleagues who represent the Windsor ridings to stand up and demonstrate their support for their team by participating in a friendly wager to be determined by the winner of this Ontario Hockey League final. When my mighty Battalion proves victorious, the members from Windsor should agree to wear the white, green and gold jerseys of the Battalion, who will have clearly demonstrated their dominance in hockey by being crowned the best team in the province. If by some miracle the Spitfires manage to win the coveted championship, I am prepared to don the red jersey of the Windsor Spitfires.

I want to wish my Brampton Battalion players luck in the next six games, although I don't think they need it. The fans of Brampton are ready to support the Battalion in their quest to be the best team in the Ontario Hockey League.

Go, Brampton, go!

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Go, Brampton!

I rise today to address a very serious situation that is facing the residents of Halton. As the world faces a flu pandemic, the good people of Milton, Burlington and Oakville are more vulnerable than they need to be, thanks to years of inaction by the McGuinty Liberals.

One of the fastest-growing towns in Canada, with a population of 75,000, Milton has a hospital designed to serve only 30,000 people. Meanwhile, hospital construction in Oakville is at a standstill, and Burlington hasn't started yet.

On September 25 of last year, I rose in this House and warned that the lack of health care infrastructure in Milton was reaching dire dimensions. I warned that, "If ever, God forbid, there was a health crisis in Halton, I'm not sure if we could cope."

Around the same time, Halton Healthcare Services submitted plans to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for expansion of the Milton District Hospital and since then have consistently demanded that the Minister of Health begin the process of the hospital expansion in Milton, as well as renew construction on the Trafalgar Memorial Hospital in Oakville.

Now our fears are looming closer as this swine flu spreads throughout the province of Ontario. Given our experiences with SARS, there is no excuse for failure. We must be prepared for the worst. But in response to these lessons, warnings and statistics, the McGuinty government has only delayed, made excuses and told us to be quiet.

Well, in Halton we will not be quiet. We will not play nice while the government leaves us exposed. The people of Halton deserve far more.

RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Imagine waking up one day to what you think is an earthquake happening in your backyard, but the earthquake goes on for eight hours. It continues to go on, and it turns out that it's not an earthquake at all; it's piledriving done by GO and Metrolinx, in fact, to put in new rail.

Then imagine that the foundations of your house are shaking, and if you work at home, you can't work. If you have a business there, the business will go out of business because of the noise. If you have a school, you can't let the children out into the yard to play, and especially if you have a special needs school, the children who have autism are impossible to control because of this ongoing noise. There you've got the Junction in our riding in west Toronto.

These poor individuals asked GO to come to the table and negotiate with them. GO, a public agency, wouldn't show up and would only talk to a few hand-picked representatives of the community—stonewalled them; refused to talk even to the CBC reporter when she came out. Imagine that.

Then imagine, just to make it even better, that Metrolinx announces that—guess what?—instead of 40 trains running through your neighbourhood, there are going to be over 400, and they're going to be diesel—not clean electric, but diesel—and still you can't get a meeting with Metrolinx and still you can't get a meeting with GO.

That's the situation in my riding. I demand, and they demand, that the transportation minister do something about it.

POVERTY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak on the poverty initiatives of the McGuinty government's 2009 budget.

Our current economic situation underlines the importance to care for those most vulnerable amongst us. This government is committed to reducing poverty because of the opportunities it affords Ontarians to achieve their potential. It narrows Ontario's prosperity gap and strengthens our economy. I'll briefly focus on a few of these issues.

The first is the Ontario child benefit. This government's poverty reduction strategy will see OCB payments nearly doubled, from \$600 to \$1,100, per child

starting in July 2009. This is two years ahead of schedule and is an impressive 83% increase in the maximum benefit compared to 2008. Nearly 115,000 more families will be eligible for OCB than there were in 2008, with an additional \$400 million going out in OCB payments.

The second initiative is a 2% increase in social assistance rates in 2009-10, to include families receiving temporary care assistance for children with severe disabilities and those in long-term-care homes who receive comfort allowance.

Third, the government is spending over \$1.2 billion in the next two years, in partnership with the federal government, to construct and retrofit affordable housing units; also, \$700 million to rehabilitate 50,000 social housing units.

With all these initiatives being undertaken, we consider that this government is committed to assisting those most in need, and I urge all members of this House to support this budget because Ontarians will benefit across this province.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This government would like the people of Ontario to believe that the HST won't cost them much. They're trying to pretend that with the McGuinty bribe, you'll break even, but they won't. The truth is that this is going to cost Ontarians thousands and thousands of dollars.

For the 25-year-old who buys two cups of coffee a day, it will cost an extra \$83 a year, or \$4,576 over a lifetime, and that's just coffee.

Put together all the items that are increased by 8%, and the cost to Ontarians is huge.

A Woodstock woman who's worried her husband might lose his job calculated this tax will cost her \$967 a year, or \$39,000 over her lifetime.

A working senior from Caledon estimated that this will cost him \$846 per year and \$11,850 over his lifetime. A mother of two from Sudbury calculated that this will cost her \$859 per year, or \$36,946 over her lifetime.

1310

If you would like to figure out how much the Dalton sales tax is going to cost you, I encourage you to visit my website at www.erniehardeman.com. We have put together a simple calculator that lets you work out how much the 8% increase will cost you on just a few items that every Ontarian uses every day.

I challenge all my colleagues on the other side of the House to do the calculation, figure out how much it will cost them and then tell the Premier, "Scrap the Dalton tax."

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise in the House today to remind members and all Ontarians about the McGuinty government's dedication to improving the quality of health care services for all Ontarians.

This government realizes that timely and effective health care is becoming an even greater priority as Ontario's population ages. The McGuinty government has responded with bold funding initiatives, which will enable patients to receive better care closer to home by:

- increasing overall hospital funding from \$10.9 billion in 2003 to \$15.4 billion in fiscal 2009-10, an overall 37% increase;

- hiring 8,000 new nurses and expanding medical school spaces by some 23%;

- having no less than 100 major hospital construction projects completed or underway;

- creating 150 family health teams so that doctors, nurses and other health care professionals work in teams to provide 24/7 care; and

- rebuilding 35,000 beds over the next 10 years—that's more than half the homes in the province of Ontario.

The McGuinty government has responded to the calls for improving the health care system. While there's much more to do, our government will continue to work with front-line workers and hospital staff to ensure health care in Ontario is the very best that it can be.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Climate change is one of the fundamental challenges facing us today. Climate change does not know territorial boundaries and does not respect economic uncertainty. That's why Ontario is taking bold action to make our community schools greener and to stimulate the economy while creating the next generation of jobs.

Ontario is committing more than \$550 million over the next two years to make 1,000 public schools more energy-efficient. These upgrades will give kids better places to learn, help our school boards save energy and strengthen our communities.

Construction on these green upgrades will start as early as this summer on such projects as:

- retrofitting buildings with new energy efficient heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems and boilers;

- conducting energy audits to help manage and conserve energy;

- upgrading inefficient classrooms to improve the school learning environment; and

- adding environmental education to the curriculum in every subject and in every grade, as well as expanding programs like EcoSchools that teach students about conserving energy, minimizing waste and greening school grounds.

These investments underscore our government's commitment to the environment and to Ontario's children. We will work hard to improve the learning environment for all Ontario schools and students.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Levac: Ontarians read every day about the impacts of the global financial crisis. The McGuinty government has responded with both immediate and

long-term initiatives to rebuild our economy and improve the lives of Ontarians.

These timely investments in Ontario's infrastructure and its citizens will help create and sustain the jobs of today and allow Ontarians to compete for the jobs of tomorrow. We know that these investments will enhance Ontario's infrastructure base, improve the skills and the knowledge of its workforce and support key sectors of our economy. We will work hard to build a stronger Ontario by:

- investing \$32.5 billion over the next two years in infrastructure projects—something I'm absolutely sure that every member in this House will seek for their riding—in partnership with the federal, provincial and municipal governments. These investments will support 300,000 jobs to improve our province's schools, hospitals, public institutions and roads;

- providing more than \$750 million for job creation and skills training. This will enhance the apprenticeship training tax credit, and it will become the most generous in Canada; and

- providing specific sectors, including forestry and manufacturing, with supports to help them become more competitive and ensure they remain major contributors to the Ontario economy through enhanced funding for capital projects.

These investments highlight the McGuinty government's commitment to Ontario families, and we will continue to work hard with all of our partners to help make it through this uncertainty and come out on the other side stronger than ever.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Orazietti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs leave to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / *Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 / *Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto, the title of which is amended to read "An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 and to make consequential amendments to another Act / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi."*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, April 7, 2009, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Mr. Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / *Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'll do it in ministerial statements, Speaker.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Brad Duguid: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that the following change be made to the membership of the Standing Committee

on Regulations and Private Bills: that Mr. Naqvi is removed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motions? Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think that's it, Mr. Speaker. I don't have any more. You gave me a little scare there; I thought maybe I had another one that I didn't know about.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Today I introduced a bill aimed at bringing our mining legislation into harmony with the values of a modern Ontario while at the same time promoting a strong, vibrant and competitive mineral industry. If passed, this legislation would revitalize Ontario's approach to mineral exploration and mineral development.

It proposes bold steps towards making our Mining Act modern, effective and innovative, through legislation that would balance all of our respective interests and benefit all Ontarians as well as provide clarity and certainty to the minerals industry.

The Mining Amendment Act would deliver on a pledge made last July by Premier Dalton McGuinty when, as part of his announcement of the far north planning initiative, he called for a modernized Mining Act—one that would promote mineral exploration and development that is more respectful of aboriginal communities and private landholders. I believe we have succeeded in drafting legislation that would fulfill the Premier's commitment.

To do so, we have relied on advice from individual First Nations, aboriginal organizations, a wide range of stakeholder groups, communities from across the province and many, many interested citizens. I want to thank especially Aboriginal Affairs Minister Brad Duguid for his tremendous support and assistance throughout this process. Thank you, Minister.

1320

I certainly want to also recognize the First Nation leaders, industry representatives and other stakeholders who were with me earlier today to mark the introduction of this bill. I extend a special thanks for their words of support to Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse, who is here in the Legislature today—thank you, Regional Chief; Grand Chief John Beaucage of the Union of Ontario Indians; Garry Clark, executive director of the Ontario Prospectors Association; George R. Burns, vice-president for Canada and the United States of Goldcorp Corp.; and Larry Innes, the executive director of the Canadian Boreal Initiative. I also want to welcome Bob

Goulais—I see Bob Goulais there—the executive assistant to Grand Chief Beaucage who is with us in the gallery today. Thank you.

The participation of these groups and individuals has been much appreciated. It has been instrumental in our ability to maintain a balanced approach to modernization, an approach that sought to reconcile many divergent views for the benefit of all Ontarians.

There are two features of this proposed legislation that give me particular pride.

First, it is groundbreaking in several significant areas. For instance, it would expressly incorporate aboriginal consultation in legislation and regulations. It would introduce a requirement for completion of an awareness program to obtain a prospector's licence, and it would introduce a dispute resolution process for aboriginal-related issues in mining. No other jurisdiction in Canada has such provisions.

Second, our draft legislation draws on a consultation process that was by far the most comprehensive ever undertaken by my ministry. Since launching this process last August, we have benefited from the input of approximately 1,000 individuals and organizations, including the minerals industry, environmental groups, municipalities and private citizens.

Our proposals reflect the input, too, of all major aboriginal organizations, as well as approximately 100 First Nation communities. These groups participated in workshops and community meetings across the province or presented individual submissions on issues that were of special concern to them. As a result of these extensive discussions, our legislation is sounder, and we are all richer for the process.

I believe we have laid a solid foundation for the future. One of our main objectives in launching the modernization process was to ensure mineral exploration and development is undertaken in a way that respects the rights and interests of Ontario's aboriginal communities. In our proposed legislation, we have tried to balance the divergent positions we heard during the consultation process in a way that is fair to all and of benefit to all Ontarians.

For instance, our modernization approach would include provisions for withdrawal of significant aboriginal cultural sites from claim staking, notification of aboriginal communities immediately after a claim is staked, and requirements for prospectors and companies to notify aboriginal communities of plans for exploration activities within their traditional lands. In addition, the proposed legislation would introduce a graduated approach to aboriginal consultation.

Consultation requirements would be outlined. Environmental rehabilitation would be required, and exploration plans or permits would be required for activities.

These are significant changes. They would address some of the key concerns we heard during our consultation process.

Another objective in modernizing the Mining Act was to mitigate the conflicts that have arisen between mineral

exploration companies and private landholders who do not hold the mineral rights on their properties. Ontario proposes to withdraw crown-held mining rights in southern Ontario where surface rights are privately held, while respecting existing claims and leases. In northern Ontario, private landholders could apply for such withdrawals, but Ontario would consider criteria such as mineral potential before deciding whether to grant them.

When private land is involved, there would be enhanced requirements for notification as well as enhanced provisions covering the post-staking and exploration stages. In addition, owners of patented mining land who were not using that land for mining purposes would be able to apply for an exemption from the mining land tax.

These proposed changes would address the concerns of private property owners, provide clear rules to the exploration industry and reduce the impact of mineral exploration on the environment.

Our proposed legislation also responds to calls for greater consideration for the environment. It would reduce impacts to the environment by including rehabilitation requirements in our new graduated regulatory approach to exploration activities. It would embed in legislation the provision that no new mine opening can occur in the far north unless there is an approved community-based land use plan.

The phased implementation of map staking—a modern, computer-based system that doesn't require stakers to enter or disturb the surface of the land—would reduce the already low impact of ground staking.

These are some of the highlights of our proposed legislation. I believe strongly that it sets a framework that supports significant strides in aboriginal consultation. In addition, our proposals would help ensure that aboriginal peoples participate more fully in mineral sector activities in their territories.

Working in conjunction with other government initiatives, such as the far north planning initiative and the \$30 million set aside for resource benefits sharing announced earlier this week by Minister Duguid, our proposed legislation would foster partnerships in development, promoting prosperity for aboriginal communities and Ontario as a whole. At the same time, it steers a wise and prudent course that balances all our social and economic interests.

While these changes may require some short-term adjustments, they would in the longer term, I believe, strengthen the industry and provide new opportunities for growth, particularly in our northern, rural and aboriginal communities.

We set out to create a modern Mining Act that would promote balanced development that benefits all Ontarians, while modernizing the way mining companies stake and explore their claims. At the same time, we wanted our legislation to continue supporting a vibrant Ontario minerals industry that would help our communities realize their economic and social aspirations. I believe our proposal succeeds in meeting those objectives.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It is a privilege to rise in the House today to mark the Ontario Police Memorial's 10th anniversary service, taking place this Sunday, May 3, and to pay tribute to those brave police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of their communities. Policing is a noble profession, one that is bound in duty, honour and, as we have been sadly reminded on 236 known occasions, sacrifice. On Sunday, His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, Premier Dalton McGuinty and myself will join police officers and their families from across the province to honour the memories of our fallen police officers.

We gather at the police memorial this year encouraged by the fact that not a single police officer lost his or her life in the line of duty in the province of Ontario in 2008. We are thankful for this and hope that 2008 has set a course for law enforcement in the years ahead, but we know in our hearts that as long as there are courageous men and women prepared to answer the call, there is always the chance that an officer will not be returning home to their family. That is the dark side of a profession that otherwise brings comfort and real hope to all communities in Ontario.

The Ontario Police Memorial will receive two additional names this year, now that historical evidence has shown us that they too were killed while serving their communities. They are Constable Frank Hare of the Port Dover Police Service, who died on June 3, 1951, and Constable Jeffrey Armstrong of the Ottawa Police Service, who died on May 13, 1963. I know that all members in the House will join me in extending condolences to these fine officers' families.

Time may lessen the pain, but never the memory. As an MPP, I know all too well of the devastation a community experiences when an officer is taken. My home community of Sudbury lost two police officers, violently and tragically killed in the line of duty, within six short years of each other. The Ontario Police Memorial reminds us that we are paying remembrance to heroes in life, not death. I hope all members will take the time to visit the police memorial and reflect on the sacrifices these officers made, not only to mourn their passing but to give silent thanks for their courage, honour their legacy and promise never to forget the service they gave.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

1330

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd first of all like to welcome our visitors to the Legislature today.

It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines on his introduction of Bill 173, modernizing and amending the Mining Act. I had an opportunity a few minutes ago to have a quick briefing with Ministry of Northern Development and Mines staff, who I see are watching in the Legislature, and I thank

them for their briefing. As a member of the opposition, I certainly will be looking at it in great detail to see what sort of effects these changes will have on mining in Ontario.

It is really important that the government get this right. Mining is absolutely too important to the economy of Ontario. Ontario used to be the number one jurisdiction in the world for mining investment. It was the best place in the world to invest. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case under this government.

The minister, in his speech, used the words “clarity” and “certainty” for the minerals industry, and I say that’s very important. I hope that this bill does bring about more clarity and certainty. Certainly the actions of the government, when we were about to have our first diamond mine opened in this province, were the exact opposite of what the minister was saying in his speech. They changed the rules. They tripled the tax rate for the first diamond mine in Attawapiskat, after they had spent a billion dollars and were about to open the mine. That’s what they’ve done so far. I hope that going forward, that will not be the case.

He talked about balance, and I agree that’s very important. We have conflicting interests. We have large mining companies. We have prospectors, often one individual going out into the bush. We have aboriginal communities that have a great interest in mining; mining is the largest employer of aboriginal people. We have northern communities and the whole north—the whole province. It’s so important to have successful mining. We have private landowners in southern Ontario who own surface rights but not the mineral rights.

I see that I have used up all my time, so I’m going to let the other critic respond to the other statement. But we, as the opposition, will be looking at this carefully and will try to make some constructive criticism and hopefully improve the bill.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I’d like to thank all the police services and all the police officers in the province of Ontario who put their lives on the line each and every day to ensure that we live in a safe and secure province. After all, it is their presence that stands between us and chaos. Whether it’s on our streets, in our communities or on waterways, they’re out there risking their lives in order to protect ours.

It’s a wonderful thing that in 2008, not one police officer, man or woman, lost their life. That’s cause for great celebration in this province.

At times where there are officers who lose their lives in the line of duty, we must not forget the sacrifice our policemen and policewomen have made for us. This weekend, our critic, Mr. Garfield Dunlop, MPP for Simcoe North, will be attending the police memorial on behalf of our party here at Queen’s Park, which recognizes those courageous officers whom we have lost.

I would encourage all members in this Legislature to attend and pay tribute to those men and women who have

given their lives for the people of the province of Ontario. I would also like to thank the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards for the hard work they continue to do.

Police Week is a great time for communities to show their appreciation and acknowledge the tireless efforts of these brave men and women. I would encourage all my colleagues and the citizens of Ontario to participate in the events with their police service boards.

On behalf of our leader and caucus, we support the fantastic job our police officers do in this province. They put their lives on the line every day, day in and day out, so that we can live in harmony, peace and safety in the province of Ontario. We look forward to continuing to work with and support Ontario’s finest officers.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr. Peter Kormos: I am pleased, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and New Democrats here at Queen’s Park, to join in acknowledging the incredible sacrifices of so many police officers over the course of so many years, and expressing our support for the police memorial and appreciation of this, its 10th anniversary—appreciation of its incredible testament to the sacrifice and courage and heroism of so many police officers, women and men, over the course of decades of policing here in the province of Ontario.

Policing is as dangerous as ever. The demands that we place on our police officers have never been higher. The scrutiny is of the highest level, and it’s not just from official bodies, oversight bodies, but it’s also from the armchair critics after the fact, who didn’t have to share the fear, the desperation of a deadly situation.

We say this: If we truly want to acknowledge the heroism and sacrifice of police officers, if we truly want to pay tribute to those who have given their lives, let’s make sure that our police officers in this province have the resources and the tools that they need to do their job safely and effectively. We owe them no less.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic Party and on behalf of many people who are involved in this issue from mining, environmental and First Nations, I’ve got to say the bill is quite interesting, because the government is trying to walk a fine line, but I’m not sure that they fall on either side of the fence when you start to look at this legislation.

One of the key things that First Nations asked for was that they wanted to have revenue sharing. I recognize that in this bill there’s no attempt to deal with the issue of revenue sharing, and it’s something that has to be at least spoken to in regard to how this is going to impact the ability for First Nations to benefit from the activities of mining in northern Ontario or any place in this province.

But the other thing they asked for was an ability to have a duty to consult so that if they didn't want a project to go forward, they had a say on that. As I look at the legislation, there's one section under section 204 that says:

"No new mines

"(2) No new mine opening shall occur in the Far North if,

"(a) there is no community based land use plan," which would tend to indicate that the community has to give its consent. Unfortunately, the permission is,

"Despite subsection (2), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, taking into account any prescribed land use planning objectives, permit a new mine opening for a project described...." In other words, the cabinet can overturn it, if they think it's in the economic or social interests of the province to go forward with the project.

In the case of KI, what would a future cabinet do? I'm not asserting for one second that Premier McGuinty would have allowed KI to go forward under this legislation, but you can very well end up with a cabinet and a Premier that are hostile to the interests of First Nations, and they're going to be right back where they started from. I think what we need to be clear on in here is that First Nations are respected when it comes to the ability for them to have a real say when it comes to whether mining activities go forward on their properties or not.

The other issue is that of map staking. I give the minister and the staff upstairs who are watching here some credit, because it's a really tough issue. There are traditional people like myself who say, "Listen, map staking is dangerous because it kills one of the things that we've been doing in northern Ontario for a long time, and that is the job and the profession of prospecting." What you're going to end up with, with map staking, eventually, is you're going to have the larger companies and those that are more sophisticated better able to gobble up the good ground, keeping the little players out, to a certain degree.

I know there are people who fall on both sides of this issue, and I'm going to give credit where credit is due. But I can tell you a number of people are going to be somewhat upset around the issue of map staking. I understand why the government is doing it, but I'm just saying that is a bit of a sore spot with a number of people in northern Ontario.

The other thing I want to say is that I think in the end where we're going to end up with this is, a lot of this is going to be left in the details of the regulation. As I look at this legislation, there's a fair amount of uncertainty as to what this cabinet and future cabinets will do when it comes to the regulatory schemes that empower this act. You could end up passing an act in this House, having the government pass, let's say, good regulation—I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Let's say you do good regulation. A future cabinet can come in and gut this act by way of regulation without it ever having to come into the House. The question becomes, to what degree are we protecting the rights of aboriginal people in this province

if we're leaving it up to a future cabinet, without ever having to come to the House, to make changes that could be seen as very derogatory to what the initial government wanted in the first place?

I say to the government, if you're serious about giving First Nations rights to determine what's going to happen in their traditional territories, it needs to be in the legislation, with the major components not left to regulation, because otherwise, other governments coming along could very well take away what a government has put in place and be right back where we started from.

Hon. Brad Duguid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in memory of Yom ha-Shoah, following which a moment of silence be observed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

1340

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: In a ceremony at Queen's Park earlier today, we recognized and honoured 12 Holocaust survivors, whose stories of anguish, suffering and survival of both body and spirit are a testimony to the human will to live.

These Holocaust survivors, who are in the House today, came to Ontario, rebuilt their lives and were honoured for their wonderful contributions as citizens of Ontario. Those honoured were Mrs. Fay Goldlist, Mr. Elly Gotz, Mr. Pinchas Gutter, Mr. Peter Jablonski, Mrs. Frida Lebovici, Mr. Jack Mudryk, Mrs. Zelda Rosenfeld, Mrs. Shoshana Rotenberg, Mr. Wolf Rotman, Mrs. Helen Sonshine, Mrs. Edith Weiss and Mr. Ernst Weiss.

Today we recognize Yom ha-Shoah V'Hagvurah, the Holocaust Memorial Day, a day designated for Holocaust remembrance in communities around the world.

This is the 16th year that the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day, and I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world, outside of the state of Israel, to officially recognize it.

I have visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum, in Jerusalem several times. The memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory and story of each of the six million people who died in the Holocaust. For a Jew, these memories strike the heart and the soul. Every Jew is touched by the Holocaust. We lost loved ones, family, members, friends—all members in the community lost someone. The Holocaust echoes throughout generations. The loss is extraordinary. At Yad Vashem, that loss is made real. It is concrete. You can touch it.

In the Valley of the Communities, you stand before wall after wall carved out of solid rock, listing the names of more than 5,000 communities that lived, breathed, had life, and in which men and women loved, married, raised children, worked, laughed and worshipped. Today, in most cases, nothing remains of these Jewish communities except for their names, forever frozen in the bedrock of Yad Vashem. It was there that I found the name of the

city where my father was born, Czystochowa, and the city where my mother was born, Sosnowiec.

The Holocaust reaches out of the past and touches the shoulder of every Jew. The central theme of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2009 is children in the Holocaust. The Children's Memorial is especially sad. It commemorates the 1.5 million Jewish children who perished in Hitler's final solution. The memorial is carved out of an underground cavern, and memorial candles, the customary Jewish tradition to remember the dead, are reflected infinitely in the dark and sombre place. They remind one of a million stars. And as you stand there, you can hear the names of the murdered children, their ages and their countries of origin, read in the background.

Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all who died in the Holocaust, not just Jews. We also remember those whom the Nazis targeted for their race, their religion, their politics, their disabilities, or their sexual orientation. It's important to set aside time to remember all these victims, whose lives were taken by the Nazis. In remembering, we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II, in Cambodia, Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia. It is evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the United Nations 61 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust.

The declaration recognized the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law.

We are indeed fortunate to live in Canada and in Ontario, but we must never take our good fortune for granted. We must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms, and must appreciate, nurture and protect them. We must constantly remind ourselves of how easy it is to lose them.

On Yom ha-Shoah, Jewish communities around the world recite a brief traditional mourners' prayer, the Kaddish. On the evening of April 20, some of our members were at Earl Bales Park, where there were hundreds of people who recited the Kaddish.

On behalf of the victims, the survivors and their families, I would like to recite that Hebrew prayer, which is something for which all people may pray. I ask for unanimous consent to allow me to do that.

Interjections: Agreed.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I ask all members to rise.

Remarks in Hebrew.

One line of this prayer translates as, "He who creates peace in His celestial height, may He create peace for us."

We must always remember so that the world will never forget.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My constituency of Thornhill is home to the largest number of Jewish people living in

any Ontario riding. Almost 40% of Thornhill's population is Jewish, and not one—not one—home, not one single family has not been touched by the Holocaust. This horrific event has been memorialized in public, in our schools, in our synagogues, in private homes and now here in this Legislative Assembly.

Thornhill, of course, is not the only place where memorial events are held, anymore than it is the only one where you'd find Jews as a part of the local fabric. So on Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember. We set aside time to remember so as to ensure that we never forget, so that our society never forgets, so that our children and their children never forget. Those who perished can live on in the hearts and minds of the descendants they never would meet and never would know.

At a large gathering last week, the approximately 1.5 million Jewish child victims were the prime focus of a 90-minute ceremony. How poignant to see so many vibrant young people, whose future is born of the ashes of the past, showing so much interest and taking part as citizens of today. Their lives are built on the legacy of other children—children of the Holocaust, whose futures were taken away from them for eternity. How fitting that their memories survive, vested in people of another era, yet of a similar age.

I told this Legislature last year, on this day, that I, myself, am a child of the Holocaust, that my father was a German-Jewish war refugee, and that I am named for his father, who, with his mother, perished at the hands of the Nazi war machine—two small pieces of Hitler's final solution. That a place such as Canada can be my home, that a rich and generous and eminently open and fair land could allow my own children to know all four grandparents when I could only ever know one, is the ultimate defeat of the final solution and a living testimony that those heinous plans, while intensely destructive and horrifically injurious, did not succeed.

While much of the debate in this chamber is rancorous, and while we often disagree on how best to govern our province, there is no disagreement on how precious we value Ontario's tolerant and diverse society and how we must commit ourselves to its preservation. This is why, ultimately, we are all here. This is Canada's most populous province, and the only place that I would want to live.

I raise that by way of underscoring the fact that Canada has no official annual way of honouring those lost in the Holocaust, but we, in Ontario, do. The province of Ontario, in 1997, passed Bill 66, a private member's bill introduced by my colleague the member from Halton. It states that "Yom ha-Shoah or the Day of the Holocaust, as determined in each year by the Jewish lunar calendar, is proclaimed as Holocaust Memorial Day...."

Holocaust Memorial Day was first marked officially in 1998. I, along with other members of this Legislature, have attended a number of memorial services around the province where victims' names are read aloud, candles are lit and prayers for those victims are recited. The ceremonies also remember those people who defied the terror and inhumanity of the Nazi regime.

1350

Notably, we have with us today 12 survivors honoured here today by the province of Ontario: Fay Goldlist, Peter Jablonski, Pinchas Gutter, Wolf Rotman, Ernst Weiss, Frida Lebovici, Jack Mudryk, Elly Gotz, Shoshana Rotenberg, Edith Weiss and Helen Sonshine. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ontario, I congratulate you for your contribution and for keeping the flame alive.

As you can see, along with the victims, these ceremonies also commemorate those individuals who risked their own lives to save a fellow human being. At the heart of it, however, one very loud message always emerges, and it applies to both the Holocaust and to every incidence of genocide no matter where or when. Let that message be heard and repeated around the world: Never again.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise not as a Jew but as a Christian and as a United Church minister by trade. I want to say welcome to the survivors and their friends and families who are here today. I think it's fitting that I say something as a Christian. Really, it could be summed up by saying "mea culpa"—I am sorry; we are sorry—because it's not enough, it seems to me, to remember, on this sad but necessary day, the six million or more who suffered and died in a particularly brutal and cold way; we must look at ourselves and anti-Semitism today and how anti-Semitism itself is making a comeback.

First and foremost, I want to say sorry for the anti-Semitism that has been part of Christian theology. I want to say sorry for the anti-Semitism that has been part of Canadian society that turned away Jews when they were trying to escape from the Holocaust. That's part of our history. I want to say sorry on behalf of Torontonians for those signs that my father told me of when I grew up that used to pepper the boardwalk that said, "No dogs or Jews allowed." I want to say sorry for all of those institutions that would not let Jews in the front door not that long ago, for the race riots that happened at Christie Pits, and on and on. I want to say sorry because a member of my congregation who's a nurse and who worked at a Jewish retirement home told me that in her introduction to her charges there was a wonderful rabbi who said to her, "You have to find out what is ailing them. They will never tell you because they are survivors of the Holocaust, and to tell you that they're in pain means a trip to the gas chamber." I want to say sorry that those memories persist; sorry for that as well.

I want to say sorry on behalf of my family because my brother, who's older than I, grew up with David Zafer, his best friend, who was Jewish, and my brother, no stranger to prejudice as an Italian young boy at a time when there was prejudice against Italians too, used to have to walk his best friend home from school so his best friend didn't get beaten up because he was a Jew.

I want to say sorry for all of those who still can't or won't say "Sorry." I want to say sorry for something that happened very recently on University, a demonstration

where I saw Nazi signs equated with the Star of David and the flag of Israel. I want to say sorry that ever happened; sorry that that was allowed to happen in our midst today, right now. I want to say sorry for the rampant anti-Semitism that is still part of campus life in this province in places, still part of the fabric of our society. We need to do something about it in honour of the victims of the Holocaust.

In our own church what we did in part was to celebrate Passover—not a Christianized Passover, but we invited a rabbi or a Jew to come in and lead Passover with us and to teach us the various elements of the seder dinner and what it meant. It was our small little step towards beginning to understand a history that we were so complicit with.

So again, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I want to honour you. I want to thank you for coming here. I want to recognize that this is something ongoing, that it's not something in the past. It's something we deal with very much: anti-Semitism in this country and in our lives. I want to swear to you, and I think on behalf of everyone here, that it is our duty and it is our will to stamp it out wherever we see it, to fight it wherever it raises its ugly head so that we can put some real soul behind the words of my friend who said, "Never again." Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and all of our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition in support of the caregivers and nannies who work in our communities.

"Whereas a number of" caregivers and nannies have been exploited by "recruitment agencies" under extreme circumstances; "and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas in Ontario, the former" Mike Harris "Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have an important petition given to me by the community called East of the Tracks, composed of residents who live east of the railway tracks affected by the West Diamond joint venture project. It's addressed to the Ontario Legislature and to the Minister of Transportation and it reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit's West Diamond project is using a method of pile installation that is ill-suited to an urban environment and causing undue disruption and harm to residents in neighbourhoods on both sides of the railroad tracks;" many people are distraught and have suffered physical and mental ailments due to the construction; sound and intense low vibrations have displaced residents from their homes during the day and displaced multiple businesses; the noise is harmful to infants and children outside, and people who are ill or caring for children cannot stay at home during the day; duplicates of home inspections are being withheld from owners and businesses by order of the construction company in charge;

"Whereas there are other methods of installing piles that would cause minimal disruption and no harm to residents or property;

"Whereas the actions of GO Transit have been inadequate to mitigate the human and property concerns experienced by residents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Cease the current method of pile installation used in the West Diamond project immediately and engage in a consultation with the community residents to find a mutually agreed upon method that ends the damage to homes, our quality of life and our physical health."

Since I agree with the petition, I'm delighted to sign it as well. Thank you very much.

1400

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition here, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the ... Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in

Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas:

"(1) ROCHE-NCE, a consulting firm hired to study potential sites for an interprovincial crossing between Ottawa and Gatineau, is recommending that an interprovincial bridge across the Ottawa River be built at Kettle Island, connecting to the scenic Aviation Parkway in Ottawa, turning it into a four-lane commuter and truck route passing through downtown residential communities;

"(2) Along the proposed route are homes, seniors' apartments, schools, parks, the Montfort Long Term Care Facility and the Montfort Hospital, all of which would be severely impacted by noise, vibration and disease-causing air pollution;

"(3) A truck and commuter route through neighbourhoods is a safety issue because of the increased risk to pedestrians and cyclists and the transport of hazardous materials; and

"(4) There are other, more suitable corridors further east, outside of the downtown core, which would have minimal impact on Ottawa residents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject the recommendation of a bridge at Kettle Island and to select a more suitable corridor to proceed to phase 2 of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Zachary.

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workplace harassment (physical/psychological) and violence are linked to the mental and physical ill-health and safety of workers in Ontario; and

"Whereas harassment and violence need to be defined as violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act so that it is dealt with as quickly and earnestly by employers as other health and safety issues are; and

"Whereas employers will have a legal avenue and/or a legal obligation to deal with workplace harassment and

violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment; and

"Whereas harassment poisons a workplace, taking many forms—verbal/physical abuse, sabotage, intimidation, bullying, sexism and racism, and should not be tolerated; and

"Whereas harassment in any form harms a target's physical and mental health, esteem and productivity, and contributes to trauma and stress on the job; and

"Whereas Bill 29 would make it the law to protect workers from workplace harassment by giving workers the right to refuse to work after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment and oblige employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to treat workplace harassment and violence as a serious health and safety issue by passing MPP Andrea Horwath's Bill 29, which would bring workplace harassment and violence under the scope of the Occupational Health and Safety Act."

I agree with this petition and will attach my name to it. Alexis will bring it down.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Barbara Kyselka, who lives in Eldon Court in Peterborough, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Cameron.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition, signed by a number of my constituents, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, has publicly stated that she 'absolutely' wants to help the beginning and new entrants to agriculture; and

"Whereas beginning and expanding farmers are going to be important in the coming decade, as a record number of producers are expected to leave the industry; and

"Whereas the safety net payments—i.e., Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture payments (OCHHP)—are based on historical averages, and many beginning and expanding farmers were not in business or just starting up in the period so named and thus do not have reflective historic allowable net sales; and

"Whereas beginning and expanding producers are likely at the greatest risk of being financially disadvantaged by poor market conditions and are being forced to exit agriculture because there is not a satisfactory safety net program or payment that meets their needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately adjust the safety net payments made via the OCHHP to include beginning and expanding farmers, and make a relief payment to the beginning and expanding farmers who have been missed or received seriously disproportionate payments, thereby preventing beginning farmers from exiting the agriculture sector."

I thank you and I add my signature on this, as I agree with the petition.

SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

"Whereas the Ottawa Catholic School Board's capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions for school boards which are not in debt, where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board's education development charges bylaw;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic School Board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans."

I send it down to the desk with Cameron.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition from the good people of Oakville.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000,

and the current population is now ... 170,000," 40,000 people more; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012," which is the first year of "the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to have access to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I'm very pleased sign this petition and pass it to my page Zachary, who will carry it to the table.

RAILROAD BRIDGE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Bloor Street West between Lansdowne Avenue and Dundas Street West has been identified as the only stretch of Bloor Street that has no landscaping;

"Whereas the neighbourhood near 1369 Bloor Street West has been recognized as a priority revitalization area by a city of Toronto study in 2000;

"Whereas items for beautification include:

"(1) Developing terraced walls with flowers and planters near the railroad bridge;

"(2) Constructing new abutment walls;

"(3) Cleaning, painting and reconstructing the rusty, dilapidated railroad bridge; and

"(4) Creating brightly lit murals underneath the bridge in order to make it more secure and more people-friendly;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request in the strongest terms that our city government" and our province "immediately reactivate the 2000 reconstruction plan and CNR immediately proceed with improvements to the bridge" and that the provincial government support this plan.

"We look forward to a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape. We want to be proud to live here."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition as well.

1410

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from people from Markham, Brampton, Mississauga and Thornhill in support of our nannies and caregivers.

Whereas a number of our caregivers and nannies are being exploited by recruitment agencies throughout this province; and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse" and denial of their employment rights "at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" our caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former" Mike Harris "Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; and

"Whereas a great number of ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support MPP Mike Colle's bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, it is imperative that our provincial and federal governments work in partnership to begin a dialogue to address the 70% of Ontario's workforce that is in need of a workplace pension plan to accommodate our seniors population that is estimated to double by the year 2025.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Dickson moves private member's notice of motion 82. Mr. Dickson, pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to draw attention to workers in Ontario who are not covered by a workplace pension plan. My resolution, which was put on the order paper a month ago, has just been moved. It is, in the expanded version:

Whereas over 70% of Ontario workforce is without a workplace pension plan; and

Whereas Ontario's population is aging, with our senior population estimated to double by the year 2025;

Therefore in the opinion of this House, it is imperative that our provincial and federal governments work in partnership to begin a dialogue to address Ontario workers who are in need of a workplace pension plan to accommodate our rapidly growing seniors population.

I want to bring forth this resolution to generate a positive team effort of approval for Ontario workers without pensions. Our workers need a plan to ensure security and financial stability when they retire. Our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, put it in perspective when he said, "Our elderly are sleepwalking into poverty." Now is the time to work together on this issue that we all share a

common concern for, especially for those who will be seniors in the near future.

I would never propose that this issue could be solved with one resolution or even one private member's bill. This is a complex issue, and we need to begin dialogue. There is a profound need to address the issue, as it affects most Ontarians—and indeed most Canadians. According to Stats Canada in 2006, 68.3% of Ontario's labour force was not covered by a registered pension plan.

I have a chart encompassing some 33 years, and I would give an example of what has transpired over that time on the proportion of the labour force in Ontario covered by a registered pension plan.

In 1975, we hit a peak of 42.1% of our workforce being covered by a pension plan. In 1977, it dropped to 40.6%. In 1991, it dropped dramatically, to 37.3%, going down to 34.4% in 2000 and as low as 31.7% in 2006. This means that almost 70% of our workers do not have a pension plan. In other provinces, it is much lower, such as 26.1% in PEI and 29.2% in British Columbia. In our global economic recession, those who have no pension to speak of face an uncertain future. To see what that number could grow to is cause for concern.

I recently met with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries to discuss the topic. Their group is in full support of the resolution I'm speaking to today. Michael Hale, president of the institute, reinforces this in his letter to my office by saying, "The country's retirement savings system is being threatened, and the lack of a coordinated retirement income strategy should concern every Ontarian, and indeed Canadians right across the country." Mr. Hale goes on to say: "The Canadian Institute of Actuaries shares the Ontario government's concern that pension plans must be sustainable over the long term in order to help provide retirement income to an aging population. We applaud you for bringing forward this motion—the challenges are obvious, and the dialogue is overdue."

On that note, fellow members, I thank you for listening and for participating in this dialogue today.

Going forward, the question is: Where do we begin to develop a strategy? This is intentionally a broad question, because the challenge itself is so complex. It could involve federal and provincial co-operation in every jurisdiction across Canada. Hopefully, the end result will be a unifying piece of federal legislation that addresses the issue; I believe this is indeed a national issue.

Just last week in the Legislature, our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, was asked what our government is doing about Ontarians who don't benefit from any kind of pension—I think it was one of my good colleagues who posed that question.

Premier McGuinty has already asked Prime Minister Harper for a national dialogue on pension adequacies. The Canadian Institute of Actuaries actually agrees with and supports this idea. President Hale, of the institute, says there is an urgent need for a national debate on pensions, facilitated by a national pension reform summit, where ministers responsible for pension legislation could come together.

Our Premier understands the scope of this problem. He said, "This doesn't just affect retirees in Ontario, it affects retirees right across the country ... we need to come together nationally to solve it."

Our Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, shares a concern for Ontarians without pensions. I would like to thank the minister and his staff for meeting with me several times and providing their expertise on this topic.

Canadian retirees and those who are about to retire need the support of all political parties on this issue. Specifically, seniors are a special concern of mine, as our seniors population will double in just over 15 years. This year, it is estimated that over 1.2 million Canadians are between the ages of 60 and 69, the prime retirement ages. Looking forward toward 2031, StatsCan projects that just under two million Canadians will be in the 60 to 69 age range.

In 2007, the Canadian Institute of Actuaries partnered with the University of Waterloo on a study that was submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. The study shows that two thirds of Canadians who are expecting to retire in the year 2030 are not saving at levels required to meet necessary living expenses, and half of that group has no savings at all. The younger generation—those in their 20s and 30s—should be urged to start thinking about this early in their lives.

You know, you get married and have children. They grow up and move on. They get married and have children. One day, you're a grandparent and you're retiring. But the most concerning item is that you're going to be living without a pension. You spent 40 years looking after everyone else but not yourself.

1420

Ontarians just entering the workforce should know that private pensions can make quite a difference. For example, a 20-year-old putting \$25 a week into an RRSP or pension plan from today until they turn 60, whether on their own or with the potential of some small assistance, whether it be corporate or government, would have a safety net. This could give the individual up to \$400 per month on a 2% return, or up to \$1,450 a month based on a 6% return. This may not go very far in their next 20 years of retirement, however. In other words, this won't provide total financial security, and this is when our seniors will still need help.

Today in Ontario, our provincial government supports seniors more than ever before. The Ontario budget boosts increases in the senior homeowners' property tax grant from \$250 to \$500 annually; we have introduced a new, refundable sales tax credit of up to \$260 for low- and middle-income earners; and we are increasing access to Ontario life income funds from 25% to 50%. The new budget also introduces some \$223 million for an aging-at-home strategy to support seniors who want to stay at home longer. On top of this, the province is increasing funding for long-term care to our community care access centres. And the list goes on.

But our seniors' needs go above and beyond provincial responsibility. From the federal government, seniors

get the OAS, which is, of course, old age security, and CPP, which is the Canada pension plan. These plans provide a modest base, but they are not designed to provide full support. I previously mentioned that although workplace pensions and RRSPs can provide some retirement income, the actuary institute contends that a combination of all these resources is required.

The Premier, the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and other leading experts on the topic of pensions are correct in calling for a national summit on this matter. When it comes to pension legislation, different jurisdictions assign different ministers to the responsibility. To date, few suggestions on a strategy have been made. Even fewer suggestions have been offered as to where and how the money for such a plan would be funded. In a time of global recession, a time when existing workplace pensions are in jeopardy, it is hard to say where that money will come from, but that's the next step.

Our provincial government is currently working with companies like GM and Chrysler to help thousands of Canadian auto workers who want to stay employed in Ontario. There is a \$1.3-billion effort on the table from our Ontario government, the first subnational jurisdiction in North America to bring this forward. However, the pension guarantee fund is not designed to save an entire industry, nor is the issue of pension adequacy limited to Ontario.

In Ontario, we are doing our best to help workers with pension plans. Last week, Ajax-Pickering MP Mark Holland and I met with members of the General Motors Salaried Pension Organization, also known as GenMo, to discuss their concerns. They were most generous with their input and offered great insight into some of the scenarios for the future. The GenMo group has done a lot and continues to do more.

Still, more help is needed. An all-encompassing national solution will provide the economic security our seniors need today, in Ontario and across Canada.

I hope the House will hear more support for this resolution as we proceed today and that Ontario workers who are in need of a pension plan for their retirement are taken care of. Thank you for hearing my thoughts. My colleagues will be speaking to this, as will my good friends who are in the opposition and the third party. I would like to tell you that it's time we all come together to put in place a pension for the almost 70% of our Ontario workplace employees who are not covered today.

I look forward to listening to the rest of the dialogue from all parties in the Legislature and I sincerely appreciate your help on this effort.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is one of those motions that it's hard not to support, but it's certainly not as strong as one would like to see: "That, in the opinion of this House, it is imperative"—it starts out very strong—"imperative." It doesn't say that it's a good idea. It doesn't say that we should go this direction or maybe this is what we should do. He says that it's imperative,

absolutely imperative, "that our provincial and federal governments work in partnership"—well, now we're starting to get a little weak here—"to begin a dialogue...."

Oh, my goodness. Those people looking for a pension, I bet they're happy about that. They can just feel it coming. We're going to have a dialogue with the feds. You know, the First Nations have been having a dialogue with the federal government for about 140 years or so and they haven't got very far, so having dialogue with those fellows down in Ottawa, especially when you're from Ontario, you may not want to expect very much, very quickly.

They're going to address the 70% of the people of Ontario who don't have a pension, and yet this government—I think it was this week, or it could have been late last week—was talking about the 30% of the people in the province who do have pensions, and 45% of those people have their pensions in some jeopardy. This government has said that those pensions—if they're in jeopardy, they're in jeopardy. They're not going to stand behind those pensions. That dialogue may not be very strong from the feds, but it may indeed be even weaker from this provincial government, which seems to be walking away somewhat from the pensions that exist in Ontario.

Again, this looks to start a dialogue. It does not talk about any specific action that might be taken. It's going to be a long, long time, given the wording of this resolution, before any action comes out of this resolution.

It also seems—I don't want to put words in the member's mouth, but it seems that perhaps they're setting up the federal government, to blame them for the pension problems. Personally, I don't believe that the responsibility for pensions necessarily rests with the federal government. Certainly, the Canada pension plan does and other pension plans that are federal in nature, but there's responsibility on the part of the provincial government to ensure that pensions are available and can be taken advantage of by people who work in Ontario.

One of the solutions, of course, to the entire pension plan issue is the good jobs that did and should exist in Ontario. It's interesting how we judge the economy from day to day, week to week and year to year. In the last two months, I have been driving in on Thursday mornings, and I leave my house at about 7 or 7:15 perhaps in the morning. I arrive at Queen's Park no later than 8:30. When I have lots of time, I go downstairs and have one of those really wonderful toasted westerns that they produce in the cafeteria. If you haven't tried one, it's one of the best toasted westerns in the province. It's just delicious. But you know, a year ago, a year and a half ago, I couldn't have done that. It would have been a two-hour trip in the car to come from Milton to downtown Toronto at that time of day, right through the middle of rush hour. And yet today, the roads are empty. In fact, up until a couple of months ago, on Thursdays I would always take the GO train because I would avoid that hour and a half to two-hour drive. So the good jobs in Ontario are disappearing, and they're disappearing at an ever-

increasing rate. Although I do take my hat off to the government because they have solved one problem in Ontario, the problem of gridlock; they're getting those people off the road. They're destroying the jobs in this province, and along with that, they're solving the problem of gridlock. In the times that we live in, I can't see that this resolution is going to change an awful lot about that.

1430

Also, pension plans, of course, are built by people putting a portion of the money that they earn and having the companies that they earn that money from make contributions towards a pension plan. As you have more money available, you're more able to put that money away and create your own pension plan to some degree—to a greater degree if you have more money and to a lesser degree if you have less money. It becomes a part of disposable income as to how much you can put away.

This government has introduced a new tax which is going to have an effective date of July 1, 2010; that's when the new harmonized sales tax will come into being. There's a \$1,000-per-household grant. It's associated with some income tax cuts. They're proud to say that 93% of people will have an income tax cut. They don't say what the \$1,000 plus the income tax plus the effect of the harmonized sales tax will be, because I believe that the harmonized sales tax will take about \$2.5 billion out of the pockets of Ontarians, making it far less likely that people will put that money into a pension plan.

Let me put that into perspective for you. The largest tax increase in Ontario's history, of course, was in the famous budget of the spring of 2004, where the Liberals introduced a budget that brought in \$4.6 billion of new taxes. The second-largest tax increase in history was when Bob Rae, in the spring of 1993, I believe, brought his budget in at around \$2.3 billion of new taxes. The harmonized sales tax, if you extrapolate what happened in the Maritimes and what happened to their revenue and transfer that into Ontario's economy, is in the ballpark of \$2.5 billion. That will be the second-largest tax increase in Ontario's history, and it's being done at a time when we are in one of the most serious recessions, the most serious downturns, one of the most serious—you could even call it a ceiling in the effect that it is going to have on our province because the people of Ontario are going to be seriously impaired in their ability to finance pension plans with the removal of that additional tax from their discretionary income.

When you look at the reasons why corporations come to a jurisdiction, one of the reasons that they come to a jurisdiction is a competitive tax regimen that would allow them to be competitive on a tax basis. They might also come because of a health care system that they're moving into. If you compare the health care system that we have in Ontario—or had in Ontario—with the health care system that one might find in Alabama, for instance, I think that you would find that the health care system in Ontario would be better than the one in Alabama.

The health care system in Ontario is in somewhat of a decline. The numbers that the government keeps putting

out on how quickly people get service, whether it be an MRI, a hip operation or how quickly they get biopsies done on suspected cancer tumours: All those numbers seem to be regressing, not progressing, and that augurs very seriously for Ontario.

As time goes by, those things are going to have less government money involved because the recession that we're in, the number of cars that aren't on the road, the number of taxpayers who are no longer there and the number of corporations that aren't going to be paying taxes are going to put a serious drain on the revenues of this government. They've predicted an \$18-billion deficit. I think that deficit will go over \$20 billion before the day is finished. You'll be looking that \$20-billion deficit in the face come next spring. I guess we'll get those numbers, the preliminary numbers anyway, in June. But we'll have a good look at what happened in 2008-09 in September of this year.

However, all of those things that are facing Ontarians—particularly those 70% of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan, as the government continues to take discretionary spending money out of the pockets of Ontarians through increased taxes and through increased regulations. The discretionary income that could go to pensions will not be going there.

I would encourage this government to perhaps not have so much dialogue and have a lot more action in job creation and making this province the number one province in Canada again instead of being at the bottom of the deck, as we have been ever since this government has been elected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to start off, before I get into my notes, by responding. I have the utmost respect for my colleague from the Liberal Party. However, I'm afraid that they have missed the boat, been left at the bus stop. This is something that was dealt with. Five years ago, I was in Ottawa talking to the federal government about pension security and the other acts that cover pensions. I also have brought two bills forward to this House since I got elected: Bill 6, which would have helped people who lost their severance and lost their wages—of course, that fell on deaf ears and died—and Bill 17, which would have dealt with the PBGF. It also never saw the light of day. Now, all of a sudden, this government is concerned about people's pensions. Well, I find that really remarkable. I think this is just a publicity stunt. I think this resolution is simply the same thing as my bill, which was shot down. It passed second reading for show; it got to committee. The Liberals all shot it down in committee. They didn't even read it. To the general public here, don't be fooled by what's going on.

The NDP supports the principle and objective that all workers should be able to look forward to an economically secure and dignified retirement. What we do not accept is that the answer lies in a whole new set of talks between the provinces and the federal government. We

believe that the Ontario government has the primary responsibility—not only that, an absolute obligation—to deal with the pension crisis presently hammering hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. We do not accept the premise underlying this motion.

Let me repeat and let me be very, very clear: The province has the sole responsibility for protecting 85% of all pensions in this province. Its response to the crisis? It introduces legislation that explicitly says it has no legal obligation to support the pension benefits guarantee fund, the backup for Ontario pension plans. We think that is wrong and places the pensions of tens of thousands of retirees at risk. You don't have to talk with Ottawa to fix the PBGF; you just have to take ownership over your responsibilities that are already here.

I want to set out the NDP's broad approach to solving the pension crisis, but before I do, I want to mention that Ontario already has the basis for dealing with many of the problems plaguing the pension system these days. It's called the Arthurs report, which was sanctioned by the government and took over a year.

Now, I won't pretend that the NDP supports all of the Arthurs recommendations. In fact, we disagree with more than a few. But on balance, it is a sound report and it's particularly astute on the matter of the pension benefits guarantee fund. My point: You have a good first shot at a blueprint to fix Ontario's pension system. Why on earth do you need to talk to Ottawa?

I don't want to talk about the NDP's broad approach at this time because in the next few weeks, we'll be coming out with some reforms that will be very positive input for the people of Ontario, as I widely recognize that the Canada pension plan, CPP, and the old age security plan, OAS, form a crucial foundation for decent retirement for Ontario workers. Yet the levels of income replacement they offer do not set as their objective the provision of a retirement income that is sufficient for retirement with dignity. The Canada pension plan is designed to only replace earnings up to a certain maximum level that is significantly less than the earnings based on social security pensions in the US, for example, and many other countries.

1440

Within that low-level wage replacement target, the plan is only providing a replacement of 25% of earnings and only on a career-average basis. This means that for many workers, the CPP benefit would provide an income far less than one quarter of the average industrial wage. For women and others facing discrimination and structural disadvantages in the labour market, planned benefit levels are distinctly inadequate. Nonetheless, the strength of the public plan lies in the security of what they do promise. They are defined-benefit-type pension plans that are highly valued, in large measure because they are not simply savings and investment schemes.

Yes, as noted, the benefits that they promise, if not significantly supplemented by another pension, leave too many workers at or near the poverty line for their retirement years. Clearly, this is not good enough. At the

same time, only about 35% of today's workers have access to a secure defined pension plan at their workplace. To make matters worse, many employers that continue to offer defined benefit plans have threatened to discontinue them, downgrade their benefits or convert them to insecure defined contribution plans and type arrangements.

In our view, it is in the interest of all working people who want a secure retirement income to support the defined benefit pension plans in this province. At the same time, we are aware that most employers dislike programs that involve additional costs. This seems to hold whether one is talking about bankruptcy law reform, caps on pension administration, supporting DB plans versus DC plans, or, worse yet, non-pension RRSPs. The arguments vary, of course, but they often come down to the allegation that pro-employee reforms and pension security are unrealistic or would result in economic chaos, or are just too expensive, plain and simple.

According to a number of supposed pension experts, the DB plans are unaffordable for employers, yet at the same time, executives typically insist on handsome, gold-plated, individual defined pension plans for themselves. The same could be said for many high-ranking public officials. In our view, if the DB plans are good enough for Canada's employer elite, they are good enough for workers who make employers successful in our province.

More to the point, large DB plans are pensions with predictable and secure retirement benefits, and today constitute the best retirement income top-up to the public pensions people have. They are much better than direct contribution plans or RRSPs, where workers are required to make investment decisions and face the risk of ending up with a mediocre pension if they retire at the wrong time. Moreover, the growing trend of leaving workers fully invested during their retirement years and dependent upon market returns leaves them insecure, which is the opposite of retirement with dignity.

Therefore, it's the NDP's view that the discussion about pension costs should be reframed as, how can we ensure that the DB plans are properly funded, well governed and available to many more workers? High-value CEOs and public officials are offered attractive benefits by employers in order to keep them. After two decades of wage and benefit restraint and the growth of more and more low-paid, non-standard or precarious employment, working people want the same treatment. Decent pensions today ensure worker retention tomorrow, and help maintain seniors above the poverty line.

The gradual slide in coverage is of increasing concern to us. Much of this decline in the coverage of the DB and other pension plans has been due to factors such as massive government restructuring, leading to the shrinkage of public employment—10% in 10 years—restructuring involving the off-loading of programs and services, outright cuts and privatization. In 1992, there were 3.1 million public service employees. By 2002, the number had shrunk to 2.8 million, in spite of population growth and increased demand.

What the pension industry usually omits from its discourse is that, within the general decline of coverage, DB plans have grown as a proportion of all pensions, from 67.7% in 1992 to 76.7% in 2004. The actual number of workers covered by DB plans also grew by close to 11%.

The drop is also due to the dramatic growth of non-standard or precarious work. This includes part-time, casual, contract employment and self-employment. These areas of work have grown while full-time permanent employment has fallen to 63% of the workforce. It is estimated that only 15% of precarious workers enjoy workplace pension coverage.

To emphasize: The essence of the decline in coverage suggests that the real crisis is not so much the gradual decline of DB plans, but rather, the declining coverage of workplace pensions in general. This is particularly the case for new members of the Ontario workforce. Currently, multi-employer or jointly sponsored plans are the vehicles of growth in defined benefit coverage. If the downward trend in coverage is allowed to continue as it has for the last two decades, more and more Ontarian workers will be without a workplace pension, making the pension system their only option.

This is simply not a situation that can be ignored; indeed, it should be promoted—the CPP, OPP, OAS and GIS—guaranteed income supplement—public plans account for half the income of more than two thirds of Canadian seniors. In our view, this reality points to the crucial need for broad-based public discussion on how best to ensure that all working people in Ontario have financial security in retirement, and on the vital role of an Ontario-wide system in ensuring their security. I can assure the members across the floor that you will be hearing a lot more from the New Democrats on this issue in the coming weeks and months.

I want to end by saying that when the government brings forth these resolutions and motions on one hand, and on the other hand they shoot down bills that we bring to them that would help workers, I really have a problem. I don't want to use that word, because I couldn't use it before—it starts with an “H.” I'm just saying that this government has to learn that maybe you can fool some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all of the time.

This is simply a diversion. This is simply trying to blame it on Ottawa. Your responsibility lies within your province and to the people of this province. Until you stand up and be counted, this is not acceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm going to be cognizant of the time that is available, knowing that there are a number of members who would like the opportunity to speak to this resolution.

I want to start by congratulating the member for bringing the resolution forward. I want to speak briefly about the function of these 50 minutes that are set aside for private members' time. This is an opportunity for us, on a non-partisan basis or, at the very least, a less partisan

basis, to be able to express our views as a Legislature on things of importance within this place. It's important to keep that in context when one is looking at this particular resolution.

I want to congratulate him because he has taken this initiative. Also, I'm looking at the work of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, which took the time to write to him and congratulate him on bringing this resolution forward. These folks are professionals in the area. About 40% of their membership work in the pension field.

Among the notes within the letter they sent to him, I just want to quote a couple of parts: “The country's retirement savings system is being threatened, and the lack of a coordinated retirement income strategy should concern every Ontarian, and indeed Canadians right across the country.”

It's my understanding that 1985 or thereabouts, 1984 or 1985, was the last time that governments from across the country, ministers from across the country with responsibility, and the federal government met to speak about pensions in a formal way. That's 25 years ago.

I think that it's timely, not only because of the economic climate that we find ourselves in now, but timely that we lend our support to a dialogue, the coming together of Ontarians and the federal government, and ideally those from other provinces, to talk about the future of pensions in this country, to protect those who don't have pensions, and at the same time, maybe to speak about those who do have pensions, the nature of those pensions, the structure of those pensions, the portability of those pensions, what it means when we're all in multiple jobs over the course of our lifetimes and how we prepare for retirement.

It's an opportunity that the member is presenting to this Legislature to express our support for a structure, a strategy, an initiative to bring together Ontario and the federal government, and ideally, through that, other provinces.

I want to take just one more quote from the letter that was sent to the minister by the actuaries. In the letter, they say: “There is therefore an urgent need for a national debate on pensions”—they're certainly going beyond just Ontario and the federal government; they're talking about a national debate—“facilitated by a national pension reform summit where the ministers responsible for pension legislation could come together to harmonize their efforts and start a dialogue on the options for pension reform.”

Clearly, those who are in the business, taking responsibility, see a much broader need. I think it's incumbent upon us, and it's an opportunity we have here, to express our support for exactly the type of thing we need to have happen nationally, and for it to begin here in this Legislature on a non-partisan or certainly a less partisan basis than we might otherwise have.

This is not a government motion; this is not a government initiative. This is a private member's initiative, and I think it behooves us to support the member in doing that and begin the dialogue here in the Legislature so our government can see the interests of this complete Legislature and thus carry the ball forward.

1450

Speaker, thank you for the time; I know the time is limited for all the members who would like to speak to it. I want to thank the member for the opportunity to join him in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to stand and speak in support and congratulate my colleague, the member for Ajax-Pickering, the honourable Joe Dickson, for introducing a resolution which is very important to all the people across this province. It's very important to talk about pensions these days. As you know, this pension issue is big talk from coast to coast in North America in the midst of the crisis that GM and Chrysler are facing, and maybe Nortel, and many other small factories and companies and the people who used to work for those for many years.

The honourable member for Ajax-Pickering brings a motion to urge and encourage the federal government to start a dialogue with the province of Ontario to make sure all the seniors in this province will be protected. As he mentioned, 70% of people who worked very hard in their lives to build this province have no pension, no support, no protections. It's important for us to stand in our places and support this resolution because it's important to protect our seniors in this province. As you know, when you are young, you don't think about this stuff. Also, many people are not savvy enough to manage their financial issues.

I think this is a national matter, and the province of Ontario has extended a hand to the federal government to put in a national strategy to protect our seniors. We owe them the respect and the responsibility to protect them and make sure that at the end of their lives they live with comfort and protections and don't have to worry about how they can provide shelter and food for themselves and their wives, if they're still alive.

I want to congratulate my colleague. I'm here to stand today and speak in support. I hope all the members of this House will join us to support this resolution, to start the dialogue and start doing something with the federal government in order to protect our seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's disappointing, but it's too common around here that whenever a member brings up a very thoughtful resolution, the opposition attacks the member, attacks his idea, heckles the member, because they don't want to do something positive.

The member for Ajax-Pickering has put forward a very considered motion whereby he cares about a problem that affects his constituency and the people of Ontario, and those are our seniors. He is condemned for putting forth an idea that says that a serious paradigm shift has occurred and that it's time to undertake a different course in the way we look at pensions. That's what he's saying.

Those of us who know what people are going through, as he knows in his own riding, know we have an

incredible number of people who have worked hard all their lives. Many of them, in fact, are women who worked piecework, worked for minimum wage, worked for cash, who only have an old age security pension. That's all they have: \$9,000, I think it is, a year. They're trying to make a living on \$9,000 a year.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know the member from Hamilton East doesn't care about that.

So here you have a senior in my riding who told me that she walked to work every day from Eglinton and Dufferin up to Finch. She would walk and not take a streetcar because she had to save that money to ensure that her two daughters, because she was a widow, would have enough money to go to school. She's living now on \$9,000 a year.

These are the kinds of people the member from Ajax-Pickering wants to help whom the member from Hamilton East doesn't care about. All he wants to do is play politics with this. But there are enough people in Ontario, enough people in this Legislature who know that this is an issue that goes beyond levels of government. It goes beyond parties. It goes to the fact that we need to look at how we take care of people once they reach their golden years.

He's saying in a very practical, pragmatic way that it can't just be a private member's bill. It can't just be some grandstanding. It has to be a comprehensive, partnered investigation in collaboration with the federal government, the government of Ontario, the people of Ontario and Canada and the employers of Canada. You can't do this with one-offs.

He's saying we need to do a comprehensive evaluation, and I commend him for being positive. I really am very tired of the negative old NDP. It's about time they woke up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is a pleasure to rise in support of the resolution of the member for Ajax-Pickering. He has certainly put a lot of thought into this resolution, I think actually this is the first time, as I rise in this House, that I regret not having more time to speak on this.

The workforce has changed over the last few decades. The workplace has changed. People are moving around from job to job considerably more often than they used to. I remember that in the early 1970s people would often get a job with a company and work with that company until retirement, giving them some sort of stability.

Now the average person born in the later years of the baby boom will have held some 10.8 jobs from the age of 18 to the age of 42, according to the US Department of Labor. So this is a complete change. Obviously, some of those positions may have pensions, some may not. There are issues of portability. So it's extremely important to look at ways that potentially we could supplement the CPP and the old age security provisions to ensure that all our seniors have the kind of income security that they deserve.

Looking at the rate of pensions in the workforce now: again, a dramatic drop since 1973 in Ontario, and particularly for men. I found this very interesting. Actually, males have seen a greater drop in the proportion of the workforce that actually does have a registered pension plan. In 1973, 46.4% of Ontario males did, whereas in 2006, only 31.3%—so a dramatic drop.

It's clear we need to do something about this. Our colleague has suggested an excellent first step. Every journey begins with the first step. This kind of dialogue is extremely timely, and I want to congratulate him and hope that all members of this House support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Dickson, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to thank the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Eglinton–Lawrence, London–Fanshawe, Pickering–Scarborough East, and of course Halton and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I appreciate the input from all of the members. I particularly appreciate the input from the opposition because, unless you can mould all of the parties together and come up with a concise effort that works best for everyone, then you're not going to proceed very far.

This is a first step. I would certainly assure my friends in the opposition that I would not be setting up the Tories for a hit if this didn't work. If you know me at all, you know that if I can't say something nice, I won't say anything at all.

1500

I have to tell you that this is not about pensions, security or a number of other issues related to pensions of various sorts; this is simply about the 70% of the people in the workplace in Ontario who do not have a viable pension to give them an existence of normal living when they become a retiree, when they become a senior. I think it's appropriate that we do something about that.

I can only reiterate the words of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries when they say that they share the Ontario government's concern over pensions, that they must be sustainable over the long term and they must be there to assist an aging population. They say to us: "We applaud you for bringing forward this motion—the challenges are obvious and the dialogue here is overdue." I sincerely appreciate the dialogue here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on Mr. Dickson's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION RIGHTS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DROITS DES ENFANTS EN MATIÈRE DE SÉCURITÉ ET DE PROTECTION

Ms. MacLeod moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts related to the safety and protection of children / *Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la sécurité et à la protection des enfants.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, Ms. MacLeod, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to address the public today. I consider this an honour and a privilege to address the assembly with my first-ever private member's bill, the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act, 2008. This bill was introduced 120 years after Ontario's first children's act: the Ontario Children's Protection Act of 1888.

I first introduced the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act to coincide with the national day of the child on November 20, 2008. I did so because, as a society, we've unfortunately moved beyond only protecting Ontario's most vulnerable children. Even today, children in stable, loving homes need greater protection from the dangers on our streets. That's why this bill includes sweeping measures that speak to families across the province, including my own.

I'd like to start by thanking Megan Boyle, who's over to my right. She's my legislative assistant. Her dedication, her research and her nurturing of our stakeholder relations have made this bill possible. I want to thank you, Megan, for the great work that you have done.

I would also like to thank Jad Haffar, my parliamentary assistant, whose communications, advice and, of course, work were extremely valuable during this time.

I'd also like to introduce all members of the Legislature to the following stakeholders in the gallery today. When I say your name, please rise so you can be aptly recognized: Irwin Elman, Ontario's independent child advocate; Les Horne, Ontario's first child advocate; and Agnes Samler, Ontario's interim child advocate when we first opened the office of the independent child advocate. They're seated with Karyn Kennedy, executive director of the organization Boost–Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention.

We also have with us a very intelligent and remarkable young lady—please stand up: Katie Neu. She's with her father, Tom. Please stand up, Tom. Katie has been bullied since the age of five. She has started Canada's first online organization dedicated to anti-bullying: bullyingcanada.ca. She and her father are seated with George Pash, a dedicated father who has been fighting for mandatory reporting in our school boards. I want to thank all of them for attending today.

Others I would like to thank are Ottawa Police Chief Vern White; CTV anchors Max Keeping and Kimothy Walker; and others: Ron Jette, Ron Enson, Senator Landon Pearson, Dr. Tullio Caputo, Ontario Ombudsman André Marin, and of course Charley Coffey and Paul Gillespie. These are Ontario's champions of children. I want to thank each of them. Their support, advice and, quite frankly, their example has been inspiring to me. Each of their fingerprints can be found in various pieces

and measures in this legislation. They've helped shape my views on how we can best protect children in Ontario.

Since being elected to this chamber, I've spent many hours trying to make Queen's Park a more family-friendly place to work. I've also poured many hours into researching, consulting on and speaking about keeping our kids safe by letting them know what their rights and responsibilities are.

Before us today is a bill which first became an idea after committee hearings on Bill 165, the independent child advocate act. Later it was an election promise, and ultimately it's become a labour of love. The bill that is to be debated today is the product of many hours of researching the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, studying documents and press clippings on child abuse, child sexual assaults and other areas of child exploitation. Of course, it's also a result of meeting with children, their parents, their advocates, their teachers and their protectors.

This is a sweeping bill. It will amend six existing pieces of legislation and it includes nine new initiatives, including powerful new measures and tools which will better protect Ontario's children. I consider this legislation an important point in a discussion our province desperately needs. Our children deserve to feel safe and they deserve to know that they are being heard in this chamber.

Today, members from all political parties will have an opportunity to speak to this bill and the very issues of child protection and children's rights and their responsibilities. I believe, as I've always believed on matters of the family or on matters of the child, that this bill and this issue are above partisanship. There are elements, for example, that I know some members in the government will support. In fact, after Bill 130, the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act, was introduced, the Minister of Education put forward her own legislation containing one of the initiatives within my bill: namely, mandatory reporting for schools. There are elements of this legislation that have been supported by the NDP in the past: namely, supporting expanded powers for the Ontario Ombudsman over children's aid societies.

I'm therefore hopeful that today will mark an important and positive step forward together on a discussion about how we can best protect our kids in this Ontario Legislature. I'm hopeful that this bill will go to committee, so that I may work with the other parties and the Ontario public to adopt the best, strongest and most protective bill for children in our province's history. To achieve that, we need to start the discussion on the ideas tabled here today. Members may agree with some aspects and disagree with others, but the importance about today is airing in a thoughtful way our ideas, our concerns and possible solutions.

The time to do this is now. The statistics are staggering and the recent news headlines say it all. An Ontario incidence study estimated 5%, or 130,000, of Ontario's children possibly suffered some form of abuse in 2005. The Chatham-Kent police told the Chatham Daily News

that studies show that reported cases of child abuse only represent 10% of the actual abuse cases in Canada, and a government of Canada report in 2001 suggested that 60% of all reported sexual assaults are against children. As a mother who also happens to be a legislator, I can't help but want to do something about this. Through this bill, I intend to send a message to those who prey on children, who target them in their advertising and who hurt innocent kids: Your time is up. But in order for me and us collectively to be successful, I will need the support of every member in this Legislature today to get this bill into committee and these ideas into action.

Specific measures introduced in the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act will expand Christopher's Law to create a public child abuse registry that can be made public only at the discretion of the minister. It will prohibit and ban advertising that contains images of a sexual nature of children under the age of 16 or that is directed at children of that age. Members will agree that some people today are crossing the line.

The Education Act would be amended to establish November 20 as Children's Day, not only in our schools but also right here in this Ontario Legislature. It will require mandatory reporting of incidents of violence or abuse and it will prohibit the use of corporal punishment. Mr. Speaker, you'll be saddened to know that Ontario is one of three provinces that has not already done this. It will expand the Ontario Ombudsman Act and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act to ensure that they have greater powers. The provincial advocate will also have an opportunity for more reporting of our obligations and how we're doing with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It will also repeal and replace section 150 of the Provincial Offences Act to ensure that child abusers may be detained to protect the public safety or to maintain confidence in our justice system. A defendant's release may also be conditional on not communicating with the victim. Kids should not have to be the ones who leave their homes if they are being abused. The abuser should.

1510

Ultimately, this bill will achieve three goals: It will create more education and awareness around children's protection rights, it will increase accountability and transparency in our existing system and it will strengthen child protection tools for parents and the justice system. I'm also pleased that the measures in this bill have garnered support from many quarters, including my own hometown's police chief, who said, "As the Chief of Police for the City of Ottawa, I fully support legislation that will assist us in protecting children." I'd like to also read other comments from stakeholders.

Well-known CTV anchor Max Keeping adds, "Ms. MacLeod should be commended for the work she's done in preparing this legislation; hers is an open invitation to every member of the Ontario Legislature, regardless of party, to vault this province into a leadership role for the country."

Karyn Kennedy, of Boost, says, "I congratulate you on the action you are taking to protect children and to bring

greater awareness to the needs for adults to respond in effective and appropriate ways to concerns of abuse or violence in children's lives."

André Marin, Ontario's Ombudsman, points out, "I was very interested to learn that as part of your proposal to enshrine children's rights into Ontario law, you will be seeking to expand my office's mandate to include oversight of boards of education and children's aid societies. I congratulate you for this initiative."

Irwin Elman, our good friend and Ontario's independent child advocate, adds, "I have long respected your steadfast concern for the children and youth of the province. Your bill is a reflection of that concern."

Charles S. Coffey, a great leader in this province, said, "We have a responsibility to build a secure and healthy society so that our children have the opportunity to grow, learn, work and succeed. This initiative is one more building block for the future of our province and country."

Les Horne, of DCI, said, "We are strongly in favour of legislation to reinforce children's rights in Ontario. This will bring" Ontario "into line with all other jurisdictions across the world that have recognized the need for powerful legislation to protect children from threats to their physical and emotional health."

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies writes, "The Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act is consistent with your strong voice in children's defence.... In particular, OACAS supports your efforts to entrench in law, article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child."

Again, this bill offers real solutions to some of the dangers our children in our province face. During these difficult times, it has never been more important for us to work together, to collaborate. I'm also appealing to all members of the Legislature to set aside political jerseys, political ideologies, to work together for the greater goal of child protection and to support these measures today, so we can get this bill into committee and start acting on some of the pressing issues that we need to best protect the children of Ontario. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is an honour to rise and support this initiative, Bill 130. It's quite an ambitious bill. It covers a great deal of territory. I want to commend the member from Nepean-Carleton not only for bringing it in but for giving me lunch as well. Thank you.

I also want to introduce somebody in the gallery, my sister-in-law from Vancouver, Nancy DiNovo, who has come visiting. Welcome, Nancy.

I want to add another couple of really terrifying statistics that were provided to me by the member from Nepean-Carleton. The one that really struck home, the most extensive study of child sexual abuse in Canada, was conducted by the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youths. Its report indicates that among adult Canadians, 53% of women and 31% of men were sexually abused when they were children. That's a

horrific statistic: One in every two women and one in every three men suffered child sexual abuse. The other one—and this I think is more pertinent to the member's bill because most of child sexual abuse, as we know, happens in the home and happens with someone the child knows. But for those particularly horrific instances where the child is abducted, if a child is abducted for sexual purposes, 44% of those children are killed, murdered within one hour of being abducted, and 91% within 24 hours of being abducted. This is where the member's bill will really help out, with an expanded registry of sexual child abusers. This is when the police need to act, and they need to act extremely quickly.

I know that members here remember the case of Holly Jones. Holly Jones and her parents have been here, on another crusade, actually, and that is for Holly's law, which is a motion on the table as well, which would add to the member's Bill 130. What my motion, Holly's law, calls for is that primary prevention, programs like Boost that Karyn is here representing, be introduced into all elementary schools. What these programs do—which is very different from the old "stranger danger" stuff—is actually enable teachers to talk to students, to be open to students, to listen to students; to boost, in fact, children's self-esteem. We would like to see that. We think that would help.

But in Holly's instance, it wouldn't have helped. In Holly's instance, it was one of those random and terrible acts of her just walking home from school one day, being abducted from the street and ending up horribly tortured and dead. Her mother, a phenomenal woman, has gone on to make it her life's crusade to help the vast majority of children who are sexually abused as youngsters by people that they know by introducing Holly's law.

The other little girl, who was also in my riding and more recently abused, Katelynn Sampson, is a more complicated case. In that case, there was a little girl who was the daughter of a woman who I knew quite well, again from my church work. She used to come to our evening service and our drop-in program. She was admittedly a crack cocaine addict and a sex trade worker. Most of us didn't know she had a daughter. Unfortunately, because she was aware of her own inadequacy as a parent, she went to the court system looking for help, and she gave the care of Katelynn over to people who she thought were trustworthy.

Now, there was so little care put into that foster situation that I'm not hesitant at all to say that there is more care put into adopting a dog from the Toronto Humane Society than was put into transferring the custody of Katelynn Sampson from her biological mother to the foster parents. That's a fact; simply a signature on a piece of paper. Nobody knew the background of these foster parents. Nobody knew whether or not they had a criminal record. They did. And the end of that story, of course, was absolutely horrific. The ending of that story was a murdered child, in a case that hardened police officers said they couldn't believe. They had never seen something so traumatic, so awful, as when they walked into the apartment and found Katelynn Sampson's body.

The question arose immediately: Didn't anybody notice that she was missing from school for three months? Didn't anybody in the community notice that she was gone? Again, if we had had an expanded registry, if we knew the criminal past of these parents—something that I know Bill 133 has tried to address as well—that would have helped. That would have prevented that transfer. If our school system was funded to provide more bodies so that somebody could have gone out and visited that home, that would have helped. If we had a child care system in this province like they have in Quebec, where you can get child care that is affordable for someone like Katelynn's mother, that would have helped, because there would have been another set of adult eyes on this child, who nobody seemed to care about enough and who was lost to us. So again, I commend the member for bringing in this bill.

I am looking at some of the aspects of the bill that I think are very positive. Number one—of course, she's already mentioned this—that it require mandatory reporting of incidents of violence or abuse committed against a student, something that I think Bill 157 does a bit as well. I'd be interested in hearing more about that in committee, which is where this bill needs to go. The prohibition of the use of corporal punishment on students—that's a no-brainer. Who could believe that's still carried out in some schools in Ontario? Frightening.

Expand the Ombudsman Act to include children's aid societies, school boards and hospitals. We in the New Democratic Party are huge fans of André Marin. We think that he does a phenomenal job, and we'd love to expand his jurisdiction, not only to children's aid but also to hospitals. In fact, our own member, France Gélinas from Nickel Belt, brought in a bill to that effect: that hospitals be brought under the jurisdiction of André Marin. We're the only jurisdiction where that's not the case; hence, it's very difficult to get to the bottom of issues like C. difficile. Certainly, again, it expands the Provincial Offences Act.

1520

It also deals with something that I think has not been dealt with adequately in this House, and that is the hideous sexual exploitation of children in advertising. As the member was talking, I was thinking that most models now, most female models, start when they're 14 years old. Most of the women you see in magazines directed to women, where the girls look as though they should be in their 20s, are actually teenagers, many of them under 16, and many of them presented, which is even worse, to look their age: 14 or 13. The sexualization of our girl children is absolutely horrific. I was speaking to a young woman the other day and saying that, having been a feminist all my life, in some ways women have progressed a great deal. We can't deny that. And in other ways, it seems like we've taken a big step backwards. Certainly, in the sexualisation of girl children, that's the case. When young girls, little girls—a child of six in my own family came home from school and said that she was too fat, that she had to lose weight. This is

horrendous. Why did she get that impression? Because of the ridiculous fascination with skinniness, with thinness that has produced this epidemic of anorexia and bulimia among our girl children. Again, this is something we need to do something about. The member has addressed that. I think that's going to be more of an uphill climb, to tell you the truth, because the forces of commercialism are so great that I can see a hue and cry erupting from that.

I talked to the member about a couple of my concerns about the bill in terms of some of the punitive aspects of it. She was very forthcoming, and I think rightly so, that we don't want to punish a 17-year-old, for example, who ends up dating a 14-year-old, not knowing that. We don't want to stigmatize that person for the rest of their lives. So there's a lot here that has to be done at the discretion of ministerial staff, and should be done.

But what's needed is to hear from stakeholders. We need to send this to committee. And if we do, I think what we're going to find is that there's huge support for this bill from across the spectrum of stakeholders, that there's huge support for this bill particularly from parents. I know it's every parent's worst nightmare. I used to have nightmares about this kind of thing. I know most parents here, if they admit the truth, will admit that when their children are little and very much dependent on their care, they do have nightmares about the child walking to school during the day—simple things. This shouldn't be the case. This bill will help to rectify that. In particular, it will help the police to react very quickly in cases of child abduction. That's what we want, and we in the New Democratic Party want that as much as anyone else. I would be shocked to hear from anyone in the province that he doesn't want that.

Certainly we're going to support it. I'm going to support it. We want this to go to committee and be discussed. I would call upon the government because, let's face it, it really is up to the governing McGuinty Liberals whether this bill lives or dies. I would ask all backbenchers—we know that private members' public business is, or should be, a free vote. I would ask them to freely vote with their hearts, not, as the member from Nepean—Carleton said, from their partisan bias base but from their hearts, to support this. I would also ask something further of my friends across the way, and that is that it actually get to committee. We know that sometimes voting for a bill in this place is a way of getting rid of the bill. I would ask that it go to committee, that it be seen by committee and that it be brought back here for second reading, for third reading and, hopefully, for royal assent and proclamation. Wouldn't that be nice?

I'll stop with that. I appeal to all of you to vote for this. It's necessary. We support it. Certainly it's necessary for the safety of our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and privileged to stand up and speak and comment on Bill 130, which is brought by the member from Nepean—Carleton. Of

course this bill offers constructive ideas, and I want to applaud the member even though she didn't invite me for lunch, but I still applaud her.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We'll take a rain cheque.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's important to raise this issue in this House and talk about children and the safety of children in this province. This bill, I read it many different times, offers a broad perspective and has different elements. I know some of these elements have already been implemented, addressed by different ministries of our government from the Attorney General to the Minister of Education to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and many other elements of our government.

I will give an example. The Attorney General addressed safety throughout the court proceedings which he—we passed not a long time ago a law offering some kind of support to deal with this issue and make court cases easier on family and reform the Family Law Act in order to make those easier on children. As you know, when children get caught in the divorce between the father and mother, they pay the price. It's a part of the transformation of our Family Law Act to address part of this element.

Also, we talked about safety in schools. Many children attend school on a daily basis. As you know, some of the students and the children are subject to abuse for many different reasons, maybe for their shape or their colour or their religion or many different aspects. We're undertaking this issue very seriously and then we're addressing it in many different professional manners in order to create safety in the school system in the province of Ontario. In this regard I want to congratulate the Girl Guides, as the member from Parkdale-High Park mentioned, about some people getting bullied or abused due to their shape by introducing a badge to build the confidence of many different youth and children in the province of Ontario. It's very important, because we live in a society that judges us on our shape and our colour and in many different ways. It's important to eliminate all the barriers and obstacles facing our children in this province of Ontario.

I want to say, I have been in this place for the last five years. I've witnessed many different ministers who came through these last two terms. I'll start with Dr. Bountrogianni and Minister Mary Anne Chambers—especially Minister Chambers. She introduced a bill to allow the child advocate to be independent. I want to congratulate the child advocate, the interim, the past and the present child advocates. He witnessed what I am saying today. The people asked for it, and we, as a government, listened to the concerns of many different stakeholders, families and the child advocate in the province of Ontario to create independence for the child advocates in Ontario to report to the government and also report if the government has not taken the issue seriously. I remember him when he appeared before our committee and he criticized a bill which we introduced. Due to his advocacy, I guess we changed a lot of elements to come with

many different parts of the bill to address children's needs in Ontario.

Also, talking about the Ombudsman: I think the Ombudsman in the province of Ontario can launch an investigation any time they want and open an investigation if they see any problem or somebody reports a problem in the province of Ontario.

Also, I want to talk about a very important place in which many children live when they leave their homes. I'm talking about the children's aid society. This issue came last term under Minister Mary Anne Chambers. I believe we tried to address it in a fashion to protect the kids, because we heard of a lot of abuse going on in many different places in the province of Ontario. We thought back then some elements of the children's aid society were not strong enough to protect the children because so many people were being placed in unsafe places and among a family that didn't respect the law or abused those children. That's why I think we strengthened the law in this regard and created a section in our Children's Law Reform Act, in order to protect the children who are placed by the children's aid society within the families or communities to be protected.

We believe strongly it's our obligation as a government to protect the children of this province. We strongly believe the children are the future of this province. By protecting the children I think we're protecting our future. So I would agree with the member from Parkdale-High Park when she talked about how she cannot imagine or see any person in this place going against the children.

1530

But the issue before us is not about the children; it's about how we can create laws that can protect them with a real meaning. As I mentioned through my speech, we're addressing those issues in many different bills and many different laws and many different ministries because we believe strongly it's our obligation to protect the children. I believe not a long time ago we introduced a bill—the bullying in schools act—to make sure nobody would be bullied in the school. I think this one goes again—the PA, I guess, is going to lead it in a committee next week to listen to many stakeholders to see how we can protect the children. We heard a lot from the bullying advocates in the province of Ontario about how their kids, how their children are afraid to go to school because in some schools kids bully them and give them some kind of harassment and do not allow them to live a normal life.

I want to leave some time to my colleague the PA for the Minister of Children and Youth Services to address the rest of the issues. Again, I'm puzzled. I don't know where I stand on this issue, but for sure I'm supporting the children. We are here to support the children of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak on Bill 130, the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act. Pro-

protecting the children of Ontario is important to everyone. Unfortunately, we wake up to the daily newspapers reporting stories of children being abused, neglected, exploited, trafficked and even, in the worse cases, dying.

We all remember the case of seven-year-old Katelynn Sampson. Her young life came to an abrupt end on August 2, 2008, when she was found dead in the apartment of her caregiver and legal guardian. Katelynn's legal guardian and her boyfriend were charged with second-degree murder. In 2005, a man in Toronto was arrested for beating and burning his six-year-old boy. Toronto police had described this as one of the worst cases of child abuse they had ever seen. The father was charged with aggravated assault. The stepmother and father to seven-year-old Randal Dooley of Toronto were sentenced to 18 and 13 years, respectively, in prison for murdering their son. Randal had extensive internal and external injuries at the time of his death, including a lacerated liver, broken ribs and a tooth in his stomach.

The case of Jeffrey Baldwin was probably one of the most well-known child abuse cases in Ontario. Jeffrey died at the hands of his grandparents after being taken away from his abusive parents. When emergency response teams arrived at the grandparents' home, they found Jeffrey's lifeless and emaciated body on the kitchen table. Jeffrey was five when he starved to death in 2002 while living with his grandparents, convicted child abusers who kept him locked in a urine-soaked, feces-coated dungeon of a room. We know this is a pressing issue.

When the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect was published in 2005, it was suggested that child abuse and neglect shot up to 125% from 1998 to 2003. The report listed five categories of maltreatment of children. They are physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to domestic violence. In 2003, over one third of all cases involved some form of neglect.

My colleague from Nepean-Carleton's bill proposes, among many things, to expand Christopher's Law, which is the national registry for sex offenders, to include child abuse offenders. I agree that there needs to be accountability within the system. This is a bill about saving the lives of not only vulnerable children, but all children across Ontario.

My colleague's bill would amend the Education Act to require mandatory reporting of all incidents of violence at the school level. I support the mandatory reporting of incidents against students to the students' parents, the school board and, of course, the police. Some students live in fear of going to school, the supposed safe haven. To some, school is not a safe place; it is a place where they feel terrorized, alone, unwanted and scared. As a parent myself, it must be heartbreaking to send their children off to a place where they feel this way, but it happens in schools all across our province every single day. We, as elected legislators, have the duty to protect children at home and at school.

On June 11, 2008, our party raised in question period a terrible incident where a six-year-old grade 1 student was assaulted in a washroom of a York region Catholic school by two 13-year-old students. Although the principal was made aware of the assault, she did not report it to the parents. The parents only found out because they have a daughter at the same school. When the parents confronted the principal and asked if she would contact the police, the principal said she had no intention of reporting the matter. The parents called the police, who charged the two 13-year-old boys with assault and assault with a weapon.

Another amendment to the Education Act proposed in private member's Bill 130 is naming November 20 of each year Children's Day here in Ontario. By doing this, we are taking that extra step in ensuring that the rights of children are recognized, and that parents, educators and law enforcement officials are working together to make our province a safer place for children to grow and develop.

On numerous occasions, my colleague the MPP from Nepean-Carleton has risen in the House to bring the issues surrounding child abuse and child protection to light. This is a member who truly cares about children and wants to see all children protected. I applaud her for all her hard work and perseverance on this important subject. We have a responsibility to ensure children in Ontario are safe, secure and have a future to look forward to.

Earlier this month, two young children were rescued from a feces-smear, windowless basement room where Hamilton police allege they had been kept locked up by their relatives. Bunk beds in the windowless, pitch-black room were soaked with urine; feces were smeared on the wall. The room was very filthy, and officers found dead rats outside the room. The room had been locked with a latch, and it appeared that the children had been confined inside the room for long periods of time.

Although we know cases like this happen, it is so frustrating to me that children in this province are still being treated this way, with no regard for their safety or their rights. By acknowledging in legislation that children need to be protected within their homes, schools and communities, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that children are safe.

As a legislator and as a parent, I can appreciate the hard work my colleague has put into ensuring the safety and protection of our children through introducing Bill 130, and it is my pleasure to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to commend the member from Nepean-Carleton for her very constructive ideas. I applaud her efforts on behalf of children. I have met her own daughter, Victoria, and understand why she feels so compelled to do this.

The member and I have discussed the bill, and there are parts of it that I fully support. There are others that leave me in a bit of a conundrum as to how to approach

this, and how I feel, because it covers so many different things. By supporting one part of it, which I would like to do, I also end up supporting things I'm not so comfortable with. It leaves me wondering how I'm going to approach this.

I certainly agree that we need to have a Children's Day. I think we need to have some way of being reminded of the importance of children in our lives, and of the kinds of things that can happen to our children and why we need to protect them.

I certainly agree with the advertising part. I think that in today's world we've become a bit desensitized in a way. The member and I had a conversation about the old Coppertone ads. Remember the Coppertone ads with the little girl and the dog is tugging at her diaper? We thought that was cute, in its day. But by today's standards, I think we would have a lot more difficulty accepting something like that, simply because we now know that not everybody has the same eyes when they look at that. As I say, I think we have become a bit desensitized in that respect.

When I see her proposal for the sex offender registry—the member would like to make the registry available to the public—I am taken back to my own role on the public accounts committee. I remember having a discussion about the registry in public accounts. We know from the Auditor General that we actually have probably one of the most effective sex offender registries in the country. Unfortunately, it doesn't go throughout the country. There isn't a national system that allows these offenders to move from one jurisdiction to the other and be traced. So they can move out of the area and back in.

1540

I'm not quite sure, if we were to make the list public, whether we would not force some of these people underground. I wonder about how we would approach that, and how we would protect our children, if we give these offenders an opportunity to slip out of the province and then back in but do it without coming back onto the registry. That is a particular concern to me.

I also am looking at the Education Act. The member from Parkdale–High Park also talked about Bill 157 and how this particular bill is going into standing committee next week. It addresses the whole issue of keeping our children safe at school.

The member talks in here about requiring principals, teachers and all other board employees to report incidents, which I agree with. But I also have to ask, is there a possibility, is there an opportunity there, for no one to take responsibility, where it's assumed that somebody else is going to do it? The buck gets passed around, and you don't have one person who is ultimately responsible, who ultimately has to take that on and see to it that the police and parents are informed, that the proper actions are taken. If you make it everybody's responsibility, it becomes a little more difficult to make sure that the job gets done. That is just one of the things that, as I look at the bill, I have to wonder about.

As I say, she leaves me in a conundrum here, in terms of how I want to approach this, because I certainly do understand her need to protect the children, and from my own experience, I certainly do know how easily children are hurt and how bullying occurs. We need to do everything we can to protect our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on Bill 130. First of all, I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member for Nepean–Carleton. She has consistently demonstrated her personal commitment to the protection of children at risk. This bill is another example of her dedication to keeping every child in Ontario safe.

In the last 40 years, our society has changed almost beyond recognition. Before women entered the workforce in great numbers, children grew up spending most of their time at home or in the local neighbourhood. Back then, almost every house had someone at home all day. Neighbours were far more likely to know each other and to look out for each other's children. We had no Internet for stalkers to use. Child abuse certainly existed, but the ability of families and communities to protect their children was much greater. Kids could go out to play after dinner, and their parents would know where they were and that they'd be home when the lights went on. This world is gone, and it will not be coming back.

One of the greatest risks today is the question of isolation. Families move much more frequently. They split up more. They are blended; they are unblended. Children can easily become isolated from friends and family members—far too easily. We know from a great deal of research the impact and effects that this kind of community and familial instability has on children's mental health. It's certainly one of the things that contributes to the question of children taking on the role of being a bully or becoming victims.

We need to decrease this isolation. What we need to do today is ensure that every family, community, police force and social agency has the tools and resources it needs to keep children safe.

I just want to comment on the fact that across the province, we have many organizations providing amazing, successful programs to bring children together and help support families: the F&ST program, Families and Schools Together, which operates with school boards across the province; the mindyourmind.ca program, which helps vulnerable teens particularly; and the SNAP program, Stop Now and Plan, developed by the Child Development Institute. We have these kinds of programs in our province, and I think my colleague, the member for Nepean–Carleton, has provided an excellent template for government to take action.

Step 1 is education: Families, friends, teachers and caregivers need to know the signs of child abuse, whether physical, sexual or emotional. We need to regain the sense of community we once had, in which everyone kept an eye out for the kids in their neighbourhood.

Step 2 is giving those who protect children the right tools to do their job. Social agencies that fight abuse need our support. In my case, YRAP, the York Region Abuse Program, does tremendous work helping victims of sexual abuse. But children's aid societies, as well as these others, need more tools, more staff and more funding. Our courts need to work better as well. Our police need more support from government.

Sex offenders need to be tracked by police. Cyberstalking is a new crime, and law enforcement must keep ahead of child abusers. Governments at all levels must make sure that our police have the resources and technology to keep ahead of those who would use the Internet as a means to abuse.

Step 3 is accountability and transparency. We need to ensure that parents, legislators, the justice system and others are able to see whether or not measures to protect our children are working. This is what this bill is all about. It provides a sensible solution to help protect Ontario's children at risk.

I commend my colleague for her bill, and I urge the government to work with her and our caucus to build a child protection system that is the envy of the world. I urge all members here to support the bill in principle—that's what today's vote is about—so that we may go forward and allow public hearings where specific issues can be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. MacLeod, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: May I once again thank the stakeholders in the gallery today for their input, their friendship and the inspiration they provided me with for the piece of legislation we have here today. Ladies and gentlemen, and friends at home, these are the people who work tirelessly on our children's behalf to make sure they are protected and that they have a voice, especially here at the Ontario Legislature. Thank you very, very much.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues and friends in this Legislature. My colleague from Parkdale-High Park has been a friend since she arrived here; I appreciate her kind words. To my colleague from London-Fanshawe, thank you very much for speaking to the bill. To my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon, you have become a great advocate for children in your own right, and particularly for the disabled, and I appreciate your kind words. To my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, thank you very much.

I urge you to follow the words of my colleague from York-Simcoe and address this bill in committee and support it in principle. These are ideas that are important and that we need to talk about and discuss. We need to have Les Horne, Agnes Samler, Irwin Elman and so many others from across the province come to us to tell us how we can do our job right. I want to thank Julia Munro from York-Simcoe, the PC critic for children and youth, who has been a strong ally and friend since I arrived here at Queen's Park.

In the few short seconds left, I want to thank all the members in the assembly. We all have the same goal,

obviously, and that's to protect children. That doesn't mean my ideas are the best, or the government's ideas are the best. It means we have to sometimes augment one another's ideas and move forward. I'm appealing to all of you in this chamber today to support this bill in principle and put it into committee, so that we can have greater discussions on what we can do best to protect Ontario's children. Thank you all very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): For those visiting us today in the galleries and for those watching at home, this ballot item standing in the name of Ms. McLeod will be voted on in about 50 minutes.

1550

AFGHAN FAMILY LAW

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario join the Canadian government in expressing concerns with the proposed laws in Afghanistan that would severely restrict the rights of Shiite Muslim women hereon and into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel moves private member's notice of motion number 86. Pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to put this motion forward today on what I feel is a very important issue.

A few weeks ago, many Canadians and people around the world were shocked to hear about the law that had been proposed in Afghanistan. The Shiite Personal Status Law quickly became known as the Afghanistan family law or the Afghanistan rape law. Many of you will have followed this story in the news and will know about the controversy that surrounds the law. Any piece of legislation that is dubbed the "rape law" will certainly make everyone's ears perk up, and this is a good thing: People should be outraged.

Before I go on, I should say first that the law has never really officially been communicated to the public. Anything that we know about it comes from legislators in Afghanistan who oppose the law and who knew they had to speak out publicly against it. But there are a few key points that have been brought to the attention of the international community, and these are extremely contentious.

Arguably, the most controversial item in the law is that it will force a Shiite Muslim woman to have intercourse with her husbands every fourth night, if he wishes. There are very few exceptions to this, only things such as if they are travelling or if the woman is ill. Essentially, though, this clause says that a woman can't say no to sex, and that is rape by any standard. The law also gives husbands total legal custody over their children. It prevents women from inheriting property when their husbands die and it requires women to wear makeup if that is what their husbands demand.

You can well imagine there are a number of concerns that have arisen out of these proposed laws. First,

because Shiite Muslims make up a small portion of the Afghan population—only about 10%—it means this law targets a minority group in the country and removes rights and freedoms that are currently in place. Proponents of the law have claimed that these things are already practised in Shiite Muslim families and this law simply puts requirements into writing. They argue that nothing will dramatically change. But the true Islamic faith recognizes women's rights to own property and insists on both parties' consent for marriage and sexual relations. This new Afghan family law is about control and attitudes, not strict religious observance of Islamic law.

One of my concerns is that when a practice is codified, when it is written on the books and enforced, the likelihood of reversal of the law is slim. To force all Shiite women, a minority in the country, to submit to a law that limits their rights is not democratic. What is democratic about it? We should be concerned about staying silent when a country passes laws that restrict the fundamental freedoms of individuals.

Secondly, we need to be concerned about laws that are a step backwards in terms of women's rights in Afghanistan. Under the Taliban, restrictive laws like this one were the norm. Women were treated as property, they were subject to the wishes of their fathers, their brothers and their husbands. Under the new government, it was expected that women would be allowed more mobility, better access to education and employment, and that there would be a shift towards equality. The country had committed itself to progress, but if this law is implemented, not only will it stall women's advance, it will signal a reversal for all vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. This law is about control of women and the attitudes of a faction that needs to change. While attitudes cannot be legislated, it is wrong to entrench even further such a mindset by catering to that same faction. This way of thinking will be forced on the daughters of these women. Another generation will be denied education and freedom.

Third, it is unnerving to think that a so-said democratic government would secretly push through legislation that would have such a detrimental impact on the freedom of its citizens. As I mentioned, the only reason that we know what we know about this legislation is because of legislators in the Afghan Parliament who spoke out against it. The contentious pieces of the legislation that I have mentioned were buried and hidden within a much larger piece of legislation. Some of these legislators didn't even recall debating the bill in the House and were extremely surprised to find that it actually existed in the first place.

President Hamid Karzai did sign the bill. He has taken a great deal of criticism for this, for signing it in the first place, but he claims that aides that he relies on to review legislation missed the hidden pieces within the legislation. Karzai has promised a review of the law and has stated that he intends to make changes to it before the upcoming August election. This may be good news, but

the mere fact that the law was initially signed raises concerns about the Afghan political machine. How can this have happened, we wonder? For months prior to the introduction of this legislation, family law experts were working with the government to help transform outdated laws and to level the standards and expectations of men and women in the country. These people, these experts who so tirelessly worked on this, were completely surprised to learn of the legislation, as they too were never consulted.

On the other hand, the law had been backed by conservative Muslims. One Muslim cleric has gone public to try and explain the law. He fully supports it and insists that it has been misinterpreted by the wider public and international community. Women, he says, are allowed to refuse to have sex with their husbands, but if she does refuse, he would have the choice of giving her food or not giving her food. I ask you, should a woman have to choose between unwilling submission or being unable to eat? The same cleric says that women are still allowed to work and so theoretically they should be able to support themselves if their husbands choose not to feed them. But in the same vein, part of the legislation makes it impossible for the women to leave their homes freely to receive medical care, go to school or go to work. If they aren't allowed to leave their homes to work, then how will they buy food? There's no logic in the way that this argument is supposed to be supported.

When this law was brought to the attention of the international community, Canadians looked to the federal government. They waited to see what the federal government would say about this law and what they would do. Members of the federal parties expressed their concern about this law. But Canadians looked to their federal government for more. People want to know that when things are difficult, we will stand up for what is right and just. They look to their provincial government as well. They look to us for principled leadership. They look to us to represent their values. How federal and provincial governments respond to issues such as this is a clear indication of how we will govern ourselves at home. Our reputations are at stake here.

Ontario is a multicultural province, and people from all over the world have come to call Ontario home. Many are from places where they faced persecution, sexism and racism. They have started a new life here. They are men and women in our province from the country of Afghanistan. These people look to our federal government and to us, the provincial government of Ontario, with an expectation: an expectation that we will speak up for the rights of people, an expectation that we will seek opportunity to speak out against things that are wrong and stand up for values we fundamentally believe need to be recognized.

1600

There is a further complication in this matter and another reason why Canadians and Ontarians are looking to their governments with expectation: Canada has committed to the Afghan mission with the direct intent of

helping to establish a secure and stable government there. If we have soldiers serving in Afghanistan with the intention of upholding human rights, then we have to respond to things like this law that blatantly go against those purposes. We have to recognize that all of the work that is being done there would be in vain if this legislation were passed, a law that is detrimental to human rights and the democratic process. Women and men from Ontario have served there. We need to acknowledge their contribution by encouraging the Afghan government to do the right thing and follow through on their international commitments to protect the rights of humans and the rights of women.

I do have to point out that although there are many people in our province and our country and in countries all over the world who are speaking out against this legislation, there are people within Afghanistan who are also concerned. Shortly after the legislation was brought to the public's attention, a group of about 300 women and a few men gathered in front of a mosque in Kabul to publicly protest the law. They were met with anti-protestors throwing stones and yelling obscenities. One of the organizers of the protest told the media that the women were demonstrating because, like the international community, they were outraged at the law and the limits that it would put on their freedoms. Many of these women took a big risk. Many put their physical safety in danger to be at the protest, and many other women were prevented from attending, but their presence and determination to bring justice to their homeland is extremely courageous, and we should do everything we can to support these brave women.

A great deal of criticism from the international community comes from the feeling that the law violates the Afghan compact, which was signed in 2006 by Afghanistan and members of the international community, including Canada. The Afghan compact is a set of guidelines and principles that are supposed to be incorporated into the reformation of Afghanistan's government system. As a young democracy, it is inevitable that there will be growing pains, but that requires the rest of the world to grow closely and insist that they not divert from the goal of equality for all citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Today I rise to speak on behalf of the motion put forward by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex to express solidarity with and support for the Shiite women of Afghanistan.

I'd first like to take the opportunity to thank a volunteer in my office, Oriana Kobelak. She has just completed her third year at the University of Toronto studying political science. She worked very hard to help me put together my speaking notes for today, and I want to recognize her for her hard work.

As the Progressive Conservative interim critic for women's issues, I am pleased that we are taking a stand against this proposed legislation, which is set to severely restrict the rights of Afghan women. There may be those

who would wonder or question why, at a provincial level, we are debating a motion about an Afghan law. Human rights are important to all levels of government and are important to all people. We are doing the right thing here today by encouraging rights for Shiite women. We are doing the right thing by joining our federal colleagues to ensure that the rights of Shiite women are not being violated.

There are many concerns with what is informally known as the Afghan family law or rape law. The proposed legislation stipulates that Shiite Muslim women are not allowed to refuse sex with their husbands or to leave their homes without a male escort. A briefing document prepared by the United Nations Development Fund for Women also warns that the law grants custody of children to fathers and grandfathers only. This law, which was signed by President Hamid Karzai in March, only applies to less than 20% of the country's population, the Shiites; however, its potential passage is reminiscent of the Taliban-style oppression of women.

Although the law has not been published and the full text has not been made public, some Afghan legislators have spoken out publicly against it. Most of them are concerned that the new law had not been debated. Only due to public, national and international outcry did President Karzai agree to send the law for review.

An Afghan MP who supported the new law has said, "Men and women have equal rights under Islam but there are differences in the way men and women are created. Men are stronger and women are a little bit weaker; even in the west you do not see women working as fire-fighters." How untrue.

This MP also said that the law gave a woman the right to refuse sexual intercourse with her husband if she was unwell or had another reasonable "excuse." He said that a woman would not be obliged to remain in her house if an emergency forced her to leave without permission. I can only imagine what would qualify as an emergency.

On April 15, about 300 Shiite women attempted to take a stand and fight for their rights and freedoms in protest of the oppressive law in Kabul. However, in response to this performance of solidarity, these vulnerable women were stoned by 1,000 people who opposed the protest, and a female Afghan politician was recently assassinated.

This is a step back for Afghanistan, a step back for democracy and a step back for human rights. It is absolutely obligatory that the international community as a whole try to stop the passage of this oppressive legislation.

As elected representatives, we must accept that we have a responsibility to support women and girls who will be affected by this law. We have the opportunity to show our support for a democratic Afghanistan, promoting basic human rights.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and legislators across the country are deeply concerned by this new legislation. He has said, "Making progress on human rights for women is a significant component of the international engagement in Afghanistan.... It's a significant change we want to see from the bad old days of the Taliban."

Harper has even gone so far as to tell President Karzai that allied support for the mission could shrivel if he does not change this law that would make it legal for men to be able to rape their wives.

The Honourable Peter Kent, the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for Canada, has said that Prime Minister Harper has called directly and firmly on the Afghan government to honour its human rights treaty obligations under international law, including respect for the equality of women before the law.

The Honourable Peter MacKay, the Minister of National Defence and the Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, has said: "It is ... the Conservative government's plan to continue to put pressure on the government of Afghanistan and on President Karzai. It is absolutely necessary that the international community work together and send that clear message.... We continue to send this message to the government of Afghanistan on a daily basis."

The Honourable Stockwell Day, in his role as Minister of International Trade and chair of the cabinet committee on Afghanistan, called on the Afghan government to "live up to its responsibility" for human rights, including the "rights of women."

Canada has invested a great deal to help rebuild Afghanistan. Thanks to Canadian assistance, more girls than ever before have access to schooling, and women and girls are now recognized as full persons under Afghan law. The work that Canada has done in Afghanistan is a source of pride for all Canadians.

The Progressive Conservative Party supports Canada's position, which discourages any law that would increase inequity between men and women. This position is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Canada is a signatory. It mirrors Canadian values that highlight our current efforts to work with other countries, including the Afghan government, to secure peace, human rights and development.

Sometimes we take our rights for granted. This regressive law is a reality check and reminds us that not all women have the freedom we enjoy. It is important that we continue to speak out about inequities wherever they occur.

Many fear that the passage of this law marks the return of the Taliban-style rule. The Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, required women to wear all-covering burkas, and banned them from leaving their homes unless accompanied by a male relative.

Many in the Afghan Parliament who oppose the law said it had not passed through the normal channels, which would have included discussion of all the articles, because lawmakers were advised to let the Shiite community determine the details of their own laws.

Obviously, our opposition to this new law is working. President Karzai agreed just this past Monday to change the law that legalizes rape within marriage to remove concerns that it violates human rights. President Karzai has been quoted as saying, "I assure you that the laws of Afghanistan will be in complete harmony with the con-

stitution of Afghanistan and the human rights that we have adhered to in our constitution and the principles of international treaties." I hope that is the case. President Karzai has since pledged to complete the law review process before his term ends later this month.

1610

I hope that we stand together today on this non-partisan issue to join the government of Canada in expressing concerns for this proposed law. We have a responsibility to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. We have a responsibility to speak for the women who fear they will be stoned and killed if they publicly oppose this law. We have a responsibility to do the right thing for all of our citizens. It is the human thing to do. It is an important issue for all parties, and even though the issue may seem far removed from us here in Ontario, it is important that as legislators and as women we show our solidarity and support for women across the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand and support your bill. I'd like to dedicate my words in honour of the woman who was killed. Human rights campaigner and local councillor Sitara Achakzai was shot dead in Kandahar after receiving death threats, a prominent women's rights activist in Afghanistan, and really her spirit is here as we discuss this issue.

It is true: What can we do? We can add our voice to the growing international consensus around this. I would certainly encourage those at home and those here to go to their Facebook sites, because there is a very large Facebook community around this very issue, and it's growing. It's not just here in Ontario but it's around the world, and it's numbered in the hundreds of thousands right now. That's a wonderful way of adding pressure to the words that we're listening to here.

You've heard about the law pretty extensively, how horrendous it is. I want to caution members, though, that this is not a huge departure in the lives of Afghani women, unfortunately. A couple of years ago there was an Afghani woman who was a member of the government there who came to speak to our own national convention and talked about just this very sort of thing in actuality. The fact that it's been codified is what's so shocking, but the reality of Afghani women's lives is pretty shocking in and of itself. And not only Afghani women's lives, but it's interesting that we're not talking about Saudi Arabian women's lives, another ally that is horrendous as well. They're not allowed to drive; they can be stoned etc. This is a problem, and it's really a problem of patriarchy and patriarchal fundamentalism around the world, and we're not immune to it. We're not immune to it in North America either. We're certainly not immune to it in Ontario, where women make 71 cents on the dollar, and we're not immune to it where equity is simply something we look forward to or where only about a quarter, at best, of our Legislatures are staffed with women. We're not immune to sexism and patriarchy anywhere, so I want to put that out there because among

my friends who are Islamic—this is not only a feature of Islamic countries. Sexism and patriarchy is a feature everywhere and it's certainly a feature of Christian fundamentalism in the States and everywhere, and Jewish fundamentalism as well.

Having said that, of course we in the New Democratic Party support this resolution. We think that the government should speak out more loudly about these women's rights. It begs another question too, and I can't help but say it: Why are we there? I don't know if anybody has seen the film—it's actually a pretty good one—called *Where in the World Is Osama bin Laden?* In that film he basically goes on a worldwide hunt to try to find Osama bin Laden. After all, the American government and ours have spent billions and billions of dollars that could have gone to health care, women's rights, education, everything that we hold dear, but instead have gone on this, some would say, outrageous military imperialist adventure to try to find one man or one little group of people. We know now that Osama bin Laden is probably not in Afghanistan, if he ever was. He's probably in Pakistan, and that's probably where most of al Qaeda are. So it really begs the question: Why are we still there?

I also want to raise another name in the House today: Jeremy Hinzman. Jeremy Hinzman is a phenomenal war resister who was in Iraq, served his country and left that war because he thought it was an unjust war; who came to Canada seeking sanctuary, as so many have before, certainly from another unjust war. I can remember Vietnam; we opened our doors to those who resisted what they saw as injustice and a war that should not be fought. Jeremy came here. He's an incredible person. I remember interviewing him on my radio show years ago. He is a Buddhist; he's married with two little children. All he wanted was to speak about what he felt was an unjust war, a war that he had personal experience of, and that's the war in Iraq. At that point, it was a very unpopular view. Now it seems to be the view of the American government, but at that point he was certainly in the minority.

Now Jeremy is going to be sent back to the United States. So if there's a message that we want to get through to the Canadian government here, it's that these resisters of the Iraq war should be allowed to stay. Canada was seen as a peacemaker—or should be—before the Afghani adventure; a peacemaker in the world. We want to reinforce that stature. We want this to be a place where people can flee all sorts of injustice—sexual injustice, military injustice etc. So again, if we're speaking to or at the federal government here, that's a plea I would put forth: Let Jeremy stay and let those other war resisters stay. They're contributing members of society, they're incredible people and they stand up for what they believe in. We have been a haven for such people and we've been a haven for such women, Afghani women and other women who have fled their countries to Canada, to safety, to a country that has a great deal more civil rights than they experienced back home. So we should work actively on that front in terms of our position and our face in the international community.

You know, it's funny. I remember the taunts for our leader Jack Layton about "Taliban Jack," and it's interesting that now, all of a sudden, even the military authorities in our own government—including Mr. Harper himself—are saying that this is basically an unwinnable war. The soldiers themselves say, "We go out, we fight, we regain a bit of turf. It gets taken away from us. We go out, we fight and we take it again."

This is the same kind of story we used to hear back in Vietnam, and it's a story with tragic consequences. We've stood many times in this Legislature for moments of silence for those we've lost; young men and young women who have done their best, who have given everything to their country—their lives. We've stood here, and so we have to ask, what are they dying for? What are they fighting for? What is going on when Karzai's government can pass a law like this? Are we fighting for that? Are we dying for that? Is that what Canada is about? Is that what we want to be about?

I know that we keep extending the deadline. I know that in 2011, the troops are supposedly coming home. Let's hope for this new resurgence in the United States of a diplomatic solution, a solution where we actually send in diplomats, people who speak rather than shoot, who will work out through The Hague some kind of reasonable, negotiated truce so that we can get on with our lives here and they can get on with their lives there. It might not be the North American ideal they get along with there. It might not be, but it will be an Afghani one.

Afghanistan has been the quagmire for imperialist powers for a century now, at least. We saw what happened to Russia when they went. The Taliban keep coming back. The military solution is not working, and now we see that even the government that we've been propping up isn't so far away from the Taliban anyway.

The question, then, is a very broad one and a very big one. It's one certainly beyond the scope of this Legislature, but suffice to say, as my colleagues have, what we can support, what we all can stand together on today is the issue of women's rights—here, there, everywhere. Women should be seen as equal, and that equality should be part of the structure of our societies, wherever we happen to be, whether in Ontario or in Kandahar or in Riyadh—everywhere.

1620

I certainly will support this; it can't hurt. It can't hurt adding our voice to the hundreds of thousands. Again, I would recommend that everybody watching go on that Facebook site, sign on and add their name. Let's get a million voices from around this planet speaking out as one for Afghani women, who, no doubt, are at risk for their lives—and not only there but in many, many places around the world, including right here. You heard the statistic: One in two girl children is sexually abused. Wherever women are forced into sexual situations they don't want to be in, wherever women are treated unequally, New Democrats will absolutely be there, and this is no exception.

Congratulations to the member. Certainly I'm voting for it. Of course, we'd like to see this extend beyond the

limits of this motion. We'd like to see the federal government do the right thing and reposition Canada to what we once were seen as being; that is, peacemaker to the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to speak on this very important motion being debated here today, and I want to congratulate the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for bringing this very important issue to this Legislature.

This, in my humble opinion, is not just an issue of women's rights; this is more fundamental than that. This is an issue about human rights—period. At the outset, I want to dedicate my comments to the 118 Canadian soldiers who have perished in Afghanistan to ensure that human rights are restored for both men and women in Afghanistan, and particularly the three Canadian women soldiers: Captain Nichola Goddard, Trooper Karine Blais and, most recently, Major Michelle Mendes. These are three very strong Canadian women who have lost their lives in Afghanistan to ensure that all men and women in Afghanistan have their fundamental rights—their human rights—in place.

As many know, I was born in Pakistan, where I was raised by a very strong woman, my mother, who, being a lawyer all her life, practised law by helping women. To this day, she is very proud that she never raised a single penny from her law practice; she always worked pro bono. One of the things she did by getting together with other professional women in Pakistan was to create a group called Helpers. Essentially, what these women did, in their respective professions, was help others who needed help. One of the things my mother was involved in was helping women who were abused by their husbands or their families, who were trying to get out of abusive relationships or marriages, and whose rights were denied.

I look back on the journey my family took to come to Canada, bringing my sister and me, so that we could be raised as equal citizens and so that my sister had all the rights she needed as an equal person. It is extremely important that we raise our voices as Canadians, as Ontarians and as people of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that ensures our equal rights, to make sure that women in Afghanistan have the same equal rights.

There's no doubt that that cannot be achieved overnight, but we have to do our part in any way possible to make sure that those rights are not taken away, that those women are protected. As a democratic society, and as a society where we value the equality of men and women in our Constitution and in our daily lives, we need to send the message loud and clear that as Canadians and as Ontarians, regardless of our religion, our background or our gender, we fundamentally believe in the rights of men and women.

I urge every member of this Legislature to support this motion. I once again congratulate the member from

Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for bringing this issue forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I too would like to add my voice to those in the Legislature who have spoken on this issue today. I would join with the member from Ottawa Centre in his defining this matter as a human rights issue as well as a women's right issue.

Canada has a long history of aid and development in Afghanistan. In fact, under the former government, the bilateral aid program to Afghanistan was the largest in the history of Canada's development program. It's not easy to determine what the status of the development portion of that aid is today. We rarely hear from CIDA ministers in that regard. I am heartened by the member of the official opposition who advises that the Prime Minister is putting serious pressure on President Karzai, but I'm not confident that that necessarily is the case.

There was a very good article in one of the Toronto papers, and they went to a number of prominent women for their reactions to the passing of this law—one of whom is someone for whom I have the highest regard, and that's Margaret MacMillan, who is the author of *Paris 1919*. If I can quote her, I think she nails it in saying: "This is a regime that depends very heavily on western backing and the Canadian government, and others should bloody well"—if I'm allowed to use that word in House—"use their influence over President Karzai. They have been timid and they don't want to appear like they are telling him what to do, but I think they jolly well should."

I've had the pleasure of meeting President Karzai on a number of occasions and initially had great regard and great hope for the leadership that this man was going to bring to Afghanistan. But from my perspective, I have seen an ongoing regression, a lack of courage, a failure to stand firm when, regardless of the complexities of political system of Afghanistan, firmness was required. I don't, quite honestly, believe that President Karzai will do as he said. I think the timelines, as my honourable colleague has mentioned, that he has left between now and the time when he will see the end of his mandate, are short. I think he could accomplish it. I think only the leadership of President Karzai is going to stop that bill.

What's needed, as has been mentioned by Ms. MacMillan and by others, is that tremendous pressure should be exerted on him to do so by this government, because what we are expending in Afghanistan in terms of the lives of Canadian soldiers, if that isn't sufficient to tell this president, "You will change that law. You will join us in trying to move the society in Afghanistan toward an open, fair society"—if that price that we are paying is not sufficient, then I can't imagine what is.

We have many aspects of what we're trying to do in development, but I would say that we have had many, many successful programs on the issue of governance, attempting to build the parliamentary and judicial

systems in that country, encouraging and teaching and enabling women as parliamentarians to be a part of the future and part of the opening up and the movement towards equality in that country. But this kind of a setback is massive, and his failure to make sure that this does not move forward is integral to what all of the donor countries are doing in Afghanistan. So I'm delighted to join my colleagues in adding our voices, being firm in our voices and telling President Karzai, "You have no choice."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am quite pleased to speak to this motion put forward by my honourable colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Certainly addressing an issue such as this has political, historical and cultural dimensions.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with a group of Afghani women who live in my riding of York South-Weston, and it's their perspective that I bring to this debate today. First and foremost, these women pointed out that this law is contrary to the teachings of their religion because the Quran places women and men on equal status. Nowhere in the Quran, they said, will you find passages that suggest treating women in the manner that this law proposes. They also believe that this law was brought forward by religious conservatives, who do not represent the majority of Afghans, with the sole intention of scoring political points at the expense of fundamental rights.

1630

The bill, as we heard earlier, proposes to forbid women to go out alone unless they have written permission from their husband and in case of emergency. All the women that I met with believe that this bill will restrict everyday life for women in Afghanistan, reinforcing that sense of insecurity that the country is living in, and it will severely restrict their mobility. They fear that young girls will not be able to go to school. What happens if a mother has to take her child, who has fallen suddenly ill, to the doctor? In the opinion of these women, the majority of men and certainly of women of Afghanistan do not agree with the principle of the new law.

However, they fear that both genders will need to abide at least with the mobility rule, and that's because even though women might have their husband's approval to go out on their own, they could still be subject to attacks, verbal or physical, because of societal expectations. By legislating the bill into law, even the men who do not necessarily agree with this treatment of women will feel obliged to obey it, fearing for their wives' safety.

The restrictive and discriminatory nature of this bill, if passed, would place Afghanistan on a dangerous path which no one in Canada, the international community and, most noteworthy, the overwhelming majority of Afghans want to see. We should not lose sight of the implications that this law will have on the rights of women.

Afghanistan finds itself in a delicate economic and security situation. We all also recognize the tremendous challenges that the Afghan people have had to overcome in recent years, having to rebuild their country after decades of war and destruction. However, amidst all the obstacles before it, the Afghan government must commit itself to protecting the human rights of its citizens, including all women, as a member of the United Nations and as a constructive partner in South Asia.

I therefore join my colleagues here today in expressing the deepest concern over this law and its potential impact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for bringing this very important issue forward.

When I first heard of it, I was not only appalled, it just obviously shook me, as it did everyone else, to the core. So many Canadians, in fact, so many Ontarians right now are sacrificing their families, their limbs—many, their own lives—to fight for freedom, to fight for the little girls who finally have a chance to go to school, to fight for a better life ahead, for literacy, for free thinking, for a free and open society, and this is what we hear.

I want to speak a little bit about my experience with the Canadian military, albeit limited. I'm not a military wife. I've never been, myself, in the military. For the last year, my husband has been working with the Minister of National Defence. From time to time, out of the blue, he has to go to Trenton. He comes back, often silent, often staring at my little girl, because he's seen a little girl, either her age or younger, on the tarmac either losing her mother or her father because they went overseas to fight for freedom.

I look at this resolution as one that says to our troops that they made significant groundwork, that they have done their job and that we should be very proud. But as the Minister of Culture rightly points out, this is Hamid Karzai's issue, and Hamid Karzai better darn well know that the rest of the world, including the Ontario Legislature, is watching what he does. Men and women in this province and in this country are not going over there to sacrifice their lives so that he can buckle to any pressure to be duplicitous, if I'm allowed to use that word in this chamber, and to say one thing to our diplomats' and our political representatives' faces and to do another.

When this resolution first came out, and even to this very minute, I wished that this had been an all-party resolution, that each of our political parties had had five or 10 minutes to speak to it, because I think—although I'll support it and I congratulate the member; I think it's a brilliant thing to do—this Legislature as a body should have made that statement to Hamid Karzai and also to the government of Canada, to say that it is unacceptable for freedom fighters from this nation who go over there and fight on their behalf to save young women, to save young men and to save married women.

On that note, I want to congratulate her again. I want to congratulate all of my colleagues, who are all women, except for you, the member from Ottawa Centre, but we appreciate you nonetheless speaking to the fairer sex and to our gender's issue. You've done a heck of a job. We're very, very proud of the member from Ottawa Centre and very proud of the Legislature for taking a stand today. It shows that on some of these very serious issues, we can speak together with one very strong voice. I want to thank you again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel, you have up to two minutes for your reply.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I certainly thank the member from Nepean—Carleton for her thought on having this possibly have been an all-party resolution. It certainly could have been, I think, from the support we've heard here today.

The urgency around this motion came to me in my role as chair of the women's caucus, and it was the women's caucus that was so outraged that they felt we needed to do something as a government and as a Legislature to express our outrage at what was happening. I want to thank the members from Dufferin—Caledon and Parkdale—High Park for their passion on this one especially. I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre. He's definitely evidence of the power that women have in shaping lives. I want to thank the member from Barrie for her personal experience with Karzai and relaying her thoughts on having met the president and how he will react, or how she feels he's changed in his approach to this. I want to thank the member for York South—Weston for talking about the Afghan women in Ontario and their reaction to this.

I also want to say thank you to Angela Hersey, who is my intern and who did the research for me and wrote and drafted the speeches for me; also Rachelle MacDougall and James Berry in my office, who supported her in that.

In closing, I want to say that our government has a responsibility to be vocal about our position, together with federal legislators. In supporting this motion, we will be telling the people of our province that we believe in the fundamental rights of women and that we join with those who continue to stand in solidarity for justice and human rights around the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PENSION PLANS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 10, standing in the name of Mr. Dickson.

Mr. Dickson has moved private member's notice of motion number 82. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION RIGHTS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DROITS DES ENFANTS EN MATIÈRE DE SÉCURITÉ ET DE PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 11.

Mrs. MacLeod has moved second reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts related to the safety and protection of children. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will vote on this item after we deal with the next ballot item.

AFGHAN FAMILY LAW

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ballot item number 12, standing in the name of Mrs. Van Bommel: Mrs. Van Bommel has moved private member's notice of motion number 86. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1640 to 1645.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION RIGHTS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DROITS DES ENFANTS EN MATIÈRE DE SÉCURITÉ ET DE PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. MacLeod has moved second reading of Bill 130. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri

Hardeman, Ernie
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa

Munro, Julia
Prue, Michael
Shurman, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please stand and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo

Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Fonseca, Peter
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony

Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob

Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff

Sandals, Liz
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 9; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2009**

**LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AGENCES DE PLACEMENT
TEMPORAIRE)**

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 28, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Parkdale—High Park.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you. It's nice to get the occasional little bit of applause in here; let's face it.

It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 139. It has been a pleasure to be part of the process of Bill 139, particularly with groups like Workers' Action Centre and Parkdale legal—Parkdale legal being in my riding; a phenomenal group of people, so I want to first of all give out kudos to them—also the Ontario Federation of Labour, which deputed; Canadian Auto Workers deputed. We had a number of folk come and depute and talk to this bill. Basically, for those who are watching from home and wondering what I'm talking about, they were speaking to the need for a revamping of the Employment Standards Act. The Employment Standards Act really hasn't been revamped in any major way for a long, long time.

What this bill does—it's a kind of back-to-the-future bill, in a sense—is it undoes some of what I would consider the grievous injustices perpetrated by the Harris government. It takes those away. It doesn't move forward in any significant way, and I'm going to talk to you about that as well, but what it does is undo some of the wrongs that we've been living with—some of the wrongs being that temporary agencies have been allowed to charge fees to those who are applying to them. This was never okay. It was never legal when I was in the business, and I'm going to talk about that too, because I have the interesting

perspective of having been in the business of owning an agency and also being very concerned about social justice and now being the employment standards critic for the New Democratic Party.

1650

In my day, it was illegal to charge a fee to any applicant at any time. That was undone in 2000 and now is done again, to take us back to a place I think we want to be, where one does not charge fees to those looking for work.

What else does it do? There are a number of other things as well. It requires of agencies that they be licensed and that they put out information about the temporary assignments to those who are going to be doing them. Quite frankly, most temp agencies—not all, but most—already do some version of that. We pushed, in our amendments, to have written—didn't get that—and certainly that the details of the assignment and the estimated length of time should be given to applicants. Other realities as well, including a barrier of six months: A temporary agency is allowed to charge six months' salary to the employer if they want to take them on permanently. I'm going to talk about that too, because we feel that that's a barrier to employment.

Anybody who's very interested in employment standards: If you're that kind of geek at home who likes to read bills from cover to cover and get excited about the differences in provincial legislation, I would suggest that you look at Bill 22, which was brought in in Manitoba, as being a much stronger and better version of Bill 139. Look at the Manitoba bill.

But more to the point, the broader picture of employment standards is that this really just tinkers around the edges of what's necessary, and what's necessary requires looking at the entire field of precarious employment. About a third of our employees are hired and work precariously. What do I mean by that? I mean that they're not sure if they're going to have a job next month or next year. They're on a contract basis; they're on a temporary basis; they're on a part-time basis, so they can't really guarantee to their families—and remember, many of them are in families—that they'll be earning in the future the same thing they earn today. One could say, "And I suppose, in this economic environment, who can?" We've lost about 300,000 good-paying jobs—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Sorry to interrupt. Just stop the clock for a minute.

Perhaps you could move your BlackBerry if it's buried under there. Maybe it's not yours? The problem is, we're hearing it through the speakers and it's blasting the ears out of our translators. If it's not yours, I apologize.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just in case, Mr. Speaker, I've moved it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Start the clock. Thank you to the honourable member.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To get back to field of precarious employment, certainly it's a major problem. The days of working for one company for 30 or 35 years and retiring

are over. Right now, one out of every three Ontarians really does work from job to job, from career to career, and there really isn't a great deal of job security. The rate of unionization is going down, and if there ever is job security, it's in collective agreements, argued for and defended by unions.

That's one of the problems. One of the backgrounds of this bill is the fact that in Ontario it's very difficult to unionize. Where it's difficult to unionize, it's difficult to have a dignified labour force, because only with collective agreements, only with collective power, the ability to strike, to withdraw one's labour, does one get real bargaining clout. So without that, you're always in a precarious situation.

Ramping back from that, if you're working part-time through a temp agency or on a contract basis, you're also in a precarious situation. I want to make very clear to those watching that this is not just the area that is inhabited by secretaries, by clerks and by data entry operators; no, this is the area in our new workforce inhabited by those with Ph.D.s who work in our universities and colleges. In fact, the bulk of teachers in our post-secondary institutions are contract, precarious workers who aren't sure if they're going to get a job next year like they have this year—that's pretty horrendous—and also make, by the way, far less than their full-time, tenured counterparts. I remember a member from CUPE 3903, someone with a Ph.D. and years of experience, when we were dealing with the York strike here in this Legislature, saying to me that she had been teaching for 16 years at York University—16 years on a contract basis.

Every year she had to reapply for a job, every year she wasn't sure she would get it and she was still making about 50% of what somebody would be making if they were full-time. This is unconscionable; this is unethical.

The backdrop of what we're talking about here is ethics. It's the ethical reality we all need: stable employment, that job that gives us our dignity as human beings. And if there's something attacking that job's dignity, it attacks our dignity. So this is a serious problem.

Precarious employment has now taken over whole industries that previously supplied dignified, full-time, stable employment. What do I mean by that? Well, increasingly corporations are hollowing out their full-time staff. Why? Because it's simply cheaper to hire somebody through a temporary agency, to not have to pay their benefits, to not have to invest in a pension program, if you're lucky enough to have one—to not have to look after all that other expense of having an employee. It's also cheaper because temporary employees are not paid as well as full-time employees. This is a basic inequity that, unfortunately, Bill 139 does not address, but is addressed, I might add, in other jurisdictions.

It's certainly addressed in many European jurisdictions, particularly and notably France, where they actually have laws that say, "Equal pay for equal work." What a revolutionary concept that is: If you're doing the same job, you should get the same pay, whether you're

working 40 hours or whether you're working four hours. We have nothing like that in Ontario, and we certainly aren't going to get it with the advent of Bill 139. That, in fact, would be a much more elegant and much more direct solution to the problem of precarious work than this bill, because the person working on a temporary or a contract basis would not represent a cheaper alternative to a full-time worker, but would actually be paid what they're worth: the same amount for the same work, for the same job.

I want to give kudos to OPSEU, who have been front-runners on this very issue and, through the LCBO, are working on this as we speak. They're fighting for equal pay for equal work, again something that's pretty commonplace in European jurisdictions but is unknown in Ontario and still unknown after the advent of Bill 139. That would truly give more dignity to the workplace.

We had a phenomenal range of groups that deputed before the committee on Bill 139. It was interesting, because I asked the same question of every single group that came through. The question I asked was, would you support some kind of legislation that would protect nannies—at-home caregivers?

Very shortly before, the Star did a series of articles on the exploitation of at-home caregivers. These are foreign-trained workers who come over here and don't have their landed status. They're almost indentured servants, because they have to work for one employer for two years. They can't leave or shift employers without jeopardizing their immigration status. So they really are in a precarious situation in terms of their rights and even in terms of their safety, because they're in a private household. They don't get overtime and they don't get nights off. There are all sorts of horror stories that we've heard from both sides of this House about these nannies. Every single group I asked the question of said this bill should absolutely extend to nannies.

I have to give kudos to them for that, because out of that conversation did come two pieces of legislation: one, a private member's bill by the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, and ultimately another, from the Minister of Labour himself, which attempted to deal with the situation. So all the committee work was, in fact, extremely valuable in expanding the role of employment standards in this province.

1700

What else do we want to say about the broader picture of employment standards? We want to say something about enforcement. I said I was standing out in the rain with SEIU the other day, in front of the Ministry of Labour, speaking about the horrible plight of janitors—a question I asked this morning—the plight of those who are seen as contractors, again something this bill unfortunately doesn't address. They're called contractors because that way the company doesn't have to pay them benefits. They have to supply their own cleaning utilities, in some instances; they're sent out and they're given a lump sum—sometimes they're even charged for the "privilege" of working as a janitor and being a contractor;

some of them are forced to incorporate. It's outrageous. By the time all the dust is settled, metaphorically, and by the time the end of the week comes many of these janitors are making less than minimum wage, yet they're considered independent contractors, therefore outside the scope of this bill.

I said to the janitors assembled, "Imagine the province of Ontario if we had criminal laws but no police to enforce them. Imagine what life would look like here." In a very real way that's what life looks like in the labour force of Ontario, because in a very real way we have employment standards that are not enforced. The minister himself knows this. There are millions of dollars of unpaid wages in the province of Ontario.

A student of my husband's at Humber College asked him about the minimum wage, since he knew it was a topic near and dear to me with the advent of Bill 150 and the campaign we ran around the \$10 minimum wage. The student asked, "What should I be getting?" because he was working at a minimum-wage job, and Gil said, "Well, now, \$9.50." So he said, "Really? I'm not being paid that." Gil said, "Go back and talk to your employer and tell him that you should be being paid \$9.50, that that is now the law of the land." So he went back to his employer. You know what the employer said? The employer said nothing. He laughed at him. He said, "If you don't want the job, just quit." So then this young person said, "What do I do now?" I know the Minister of Labour will say, "Why didn't he phone our ministry?" Well, he did, and he got put on hold and he got put through—it became such a bureaucratic nightmare that he just dropped it, and that young person is still making less than minimum wage.

That's one of many, and I know that members here are seeing these cases in their casework in their constituency offices: people who come in who are fired with no cause, people who are let go when they demand overtime, pregnant women—again a story that the Star broke—who are being fired or not being rehired because they are pregnant. These are absolutely outrageous abuses of existing employment standards legislation. But if you're not enforcing it, it might as well not be on the books.

This government has promised to hire another, I think, 100 employment enforcement officers. I'm not sure whether that's happened or not, but I can tell you that on the ground it doesn't feel like it's happened. Hence, I put forward a motion in the motion papers demanding that 25% of all places of employment be inspected in a one-time sweep, and that thereafter 10% of them be inspected on a rotating basis. If this can be done, in some instances, in the health and safety inspection model, why can't it be done with labour standards, why can't it be done with employment standards? Until we enforce these laws, until we check it out, it's not going to happen.

In conversations with the Minister of Labour, for example, around the janitors, who are trying to organize with SEIU, who are being ruthlessly exploited—again, thanks to the Star for doing a piece on that as well—these ruthlessly exploited janitors are being told to just phone

the Ministry of Labour if they have a complaint. Now, maybe we live in a rarefied place here at Queen's Park, but anybody who has ever worked in a precarious job environment knows that if there are a handful of employees there, which is usually the case, and all of a sudden a complaint-inspired Ministry of Labour enforcement officer comes onto your floor and—remember we're dealing with people who are often immigrants, who are racialized, who don't know their rights, who have English as a second language—and this person comes on the floor and asks you, as has happened—I have cases to prove it—in front of your boss, "So what is the problem?" or says to the boss, "This person has a problem with you" or "Your staff has a problem with you not paying overtime," guess what's going to happen to that employee after that inspector leaves? Well, we know what's going to happen: They're going to be let go. They're going to be disciplined. It happens all the time. There was a case that SEIU was telling me about where an entire staff was let go because they suspected one person of complaining to the Ministry of Labour. This can't be allowed to go on, and it is. That is the backdrop to Bill 139.

So even if we pass this bill, incremental though it is, a step in the right direction, the real question is, will it be enforced? Because if it's not enforced, what are we wasting our time and taxpayers' time doing? That's a huge concern. It's a concern that can only be addressed by hiring more employment standards officers and by having them go out into the field, independent of complaints, to check out anonymous complaints when they're made, and just generally to check out whether industry is—because I know this can be an industry-specific issue—complying with employment standards legislation.

I've had other instances where people come into our constit offices, again, most often from racialized communities where they don't know their rights, where they're not paid at all, where they're hired and they're told that this is going to be volunteer work, where they're threatened if they decide they want to complain or even ask about it—again, abuses that are ongoing.

Many years ago in the 1980s, I did what many women do, because it's mainly a woman-dominated industry: I left my employer at that time, Drake, and started my own agency. I did it, I remember, with a loan of \$5,000, and remember billing, in the mid-1980s, about half a million dollars in my first year, so it was a very great success, and very quickly. We were an all-woman firm, which is not unusual in the employment industry and not unusual in the temporary agency industry, to have all women working in that industry. Interestingly enough, it's one of the few industries where women can actually make a substantial amount of money. That's rare, as we all know these days; we were talking about that earlier. I continued in that industry for quite a while. It wasn't a temporary agency; it was a permanent placement agency. The women who worked with me were paid on a commission basis; sometimes they did better than I did as the owner

of the agency. We placed women mainly in public relations, mainly in advertising, a little bit of everything, and rode the wave of women's equity, in the sense that at that point, in a buoyant economy, companies, institutions—notably government institutions—were trying to hire on women. So we rode that wave and did extremely well.

I've often reported on that period of time life because it's an interesting contrast to what's happening in agencies these days. First of all, as I said earlier, it was illegal to charge anyone a fee for applying in those days. We needed a licence—not that it meant much, but you needed a licence—and to get a licence, you had to show some kind of capitalization; you couldn't just be a fly-by-night organization. So you needed a licence. Again, these are things that this bill brings back in that haven't been enforced but need to be enforced.

We never paid anybody less than \$10 an hour, even for the occasional time that we placed somebody in temporary work doing filing or something at the lower echelon of office work. Quite frankly, back then, nobody would work for less than \$10 an hour. It was a buoyant economy. It's sad—it's pathetic, in fact—to be fighting for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage now when it was the de facto minimum wage 20 years ago.

Certainly we charged fees to clients for screening, for sourcing out applicants. It was a reasonable fee. It was based on what they made every year. And the agency, the industry, was governed by its own body—not the most ideal situation, I'll warrant, but certainly there was some sense.

So it was with interest that I was lobbied by and listened to ACSESS, who came and lobbied on behalf of temporary agencies, and agencies generally. One of the first things I said to ACSESS when they came and lobbied me about Bill 139 was about the six-month provision, that they could charge six months of salary for somebody going from what we used to call temp to perm. Sadly enough, what I discovered in this conversation, and what I immediately reacted to, was, why would anybody go through a permanent agency or an executive recruiter if they could hire on somebody temporarily and only pay them a six-month fee? So there was that aspect, from the agency and from the applicant's point of view. In a kind of weird, backroom way, it actually encourages companies to hire temporary people rather than permanent people off the bat, because it will save them money.

1710

The second objection I made to that, which was something, of course, that they didn't want to hear, was that this could be challenged in a charter challenge. I saw the six-month fee as a barrier to employment, that you cannot put a barrier to employment in place to prevent a company from hiring on someone they want to hire, and charging them a fee is a barrier. I suggested to them that this was open to a charter challenge, that any good lawyer could go after this, and that it's been sort of a gentleman's and gentlewoman's agreement in the indus-

try, a kind of industry standard that had never been tested in terms of a charter challenge.

What was sad is that in putting this into law, which Bill 39 does, it in a sense makes it more difficult to challenge that very aspect of this with a charter challenge, because this will be used as some kind of legal precedent for charging a fee that, before now, has been a kind of, as I said, gentleman's and gentlewoman's agreement.

That was one of the first discussions that we had with ACSESS. I don't agree with ACSESS. I don't agree with most of what they wanted and most of the changes they made. But it is interesting that the deputants from the OFL, from unions of all sorts, from Workers' Action and ACSESS agreed that they wanted to see that gone—for very different reasons, mind you, but they wanted to see that gone.

The other problem that immediately came to the fore was why home care workers are left out of this bill. They're not covered for another three years. Why single them out? I suggested, facetiously, that perhaps it's because many of them are on the government payroll, and it would cost the government more money. That's cynical, but it's hard not to say it or see it that way, because there's no other good justification for them being excluded. They're on the government payroll; they're not on the company payroll. Certainly they need to be covered and protected, just like every other labourer.

What do we need to have happen here with this bill and employment standards? I want to let the House know—it's no surprise—that we in the New Democratic Party are coming forward with our own rewrite of the Employment Standards Amendment Act. It's going to be a pretty weighty tome, because this is a piece of legislation that screams out for amendment.

What are we going to do? First of all, we are going to call—no doubt—for equal pay for equal work. A simple ethical, moral imperative, it seems to me, is that if you're doing the same job, you should get the same pay, whether you're doing it for 10 hours or 40 hours. It's the same work. Why should a temporary or precarious worker be paid that much less than a permanent worker? That's very clear.

Second of all: a minimum wage that is always pegged just above the poverty line—this would make the minimum wage right now about \$10.25—and indexed to inflation so that we don't have to go through the battles around minimum wage over and over again, depending on the government in power, but that it will automatically rise due to inflation. If the government is serious about eradicating or getting rid of 25% of the impoverished ranks of our province, then they would do this simple thing, because de facto, by definition, if they raise the minimum wage above the poverty line, they would take about a million workers out of poverty, two thirds of whom are women and most of whom are racialized women. So that's a very simple, no-cost option for this government that should be embedded in employment standards.

The other huge issue is, what is an employee? What constitutes an employee? Is a janitor an employee or a subcontractor? If they're working for one company or one employer, we want to say, we need to say and we should say that they're an employee and therefore guaranteed the rights of an employee: benefits, overtime, holiday pay etc. We think that should be embedded in the Employment Standards Act, because right now it's not, so right now the way that these companies are getting around the letter and the spirit of the law is by calling their employees subcontractors.

By the way, in not dealing with that, Bill 139 is going to open a whole Pandora's box of new ways of skirting employment standards. Instead of temporary agencies placing somebody, now we're going to have subcontractors; we're going to have secretaries working as contractors. You can see how this might move out into the commercial community because of some of the provisions of Bill 139. We want to prevent that. Again, when you look at European Union statutes, when you look at other jurisdictions where the rights of the worker are more paramount than they are here, you look at provisions like that in their employment standards.

Other things that are outside the bounds of the Employment Standards Act but are still absolutely essential to dignified labour in this province are things like the right to card check certification. We need to make it easier for people to unionize when they want to, and for sector-by-sector unionization, which is something, again, that we see in European jurisdictions. I've told this story before, but it's a great story, about how my husband and I went to Sweden, a jurisdiction smaller than Ontario. We went into the McDonald's and we discovered that the McDonald's in Sweden is unionized—a unionized McDonald's; who knew? Who would ever have thought that? I asked the member of Parliament who was showing us around how that happened. He said, "Well, 85% of the Swedish labour force is unionized, and none of them would have eaten in McDonald's had it not been unionized." We want to create that kind of work atmosphere, an environment where unions are the norm, where collective bargaining is the norm—and, by the way, something that even their chamber of commerce supported: sector-by-sector unionizing.

This is a country that has Volvo, H&M, Ikea, Sony Ericsson and other huge corporations—all unionized, all working well with the employers to come up with collective agreements that are reasonable, that are human, that produce benefits and produce a dignified labour relationship. That's something outside the bounds of the Employment Standards Act but something that's absolutely necessary, really, as the precondition for an Employment Standards Act that would absolutely protect people.

Other aspects of it are aspects like pensions. We heard a discussion about that earlier, with the private member's notion today about pensions. It's absolutely unjustified and it's wrong, it's ethically wrong, that 70% of Ontarians don't have pensions. Everybody deserves a

pension—and not a pension, again, that's going to put them under the poverty line, but a pension that will allow them to live with some sort of dignity. Many of them have worked all their lives but simply didn't have the good fortune to work in a unionized environment or to work for a company or a place that has a pension. So we need to look at pension reform, and that needs to be in employment standards as well.

My friend from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has talked about the necessity to pay workers first when layoffs occur. We need legislation within employment standards that does that: that forces companies, when they're downsizing, when they're laying off workers, when they're closing, to pay their workers owed monies before the banks, before the other creditors, because workers have worked for that money. Again, we're talking about something that rests on a solid ethical basis, and that solid ethical basis is the dignity of the worker and the dignity of the workplace. That's something that we need employment standards for as well.

Of course, when we're talking about the range of equity, we need some money going into our equity legislation and some enforcement, coming back to the issue of enforcement. When we live in a province where women make 71 cents to every dollar earned by men, there's something wrong, and the something wrong is with employment standards. So we need to do something. We need to beef up our equity commission. We need to put more money behind it so that it can be enforced better, so that that doesn't happen. By the way, one of the worst offenders on that is the Ontario government itself. So we need to look at that employment equity. That's a kind of ethical ground, that women and men should make the same amount for the same work, that part-time and full-time employees should make the same hourly wage for the same work. This is common sense. This is simply ethics 101. The fact that we don't get to that place with Bill 139 is discouraging, because at least Bill 139 gave us the opportunity to even talk about these issues.

1720

Getting back to Bill 139, amendments that would make it stronger, even as it stands—and remember, our problem with it, as the New Democratic Party, is that it's really the icing, as I've said before, where we need a cake. One of the things it does—and this is another loophole that I'm sure, as soon as the ink has dried on the royal assent and as soon as the proclamation is read, will immediately be taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers—is the fact that this is for temporary agencies, not for employment agencies. Every group that deputed before us, who were deputing on behalf of the employees of temporary agencies, called for this change. They wanted to see the terminology changed from "temporary agencies" to "employment agencies." Why? Well, for obvious reasons. All of a sudden, all you need to do is change your name. You're no longer a temporary agency; you're now an employment agency. You might place one permanent employee once a year. You might do 90% of your placements as temporary placements, but you're not

a temporary agency; you're an employment agency, because that's what you call yourself.

We have to tighten these loopholes because they will be used. We've seen that they have been used in past. They've been used successfully, hence our sorry situation in the province of Ontario with a precarious word. So we wanted this extended to employment agencies. What would it lose? I really didn't understand the objection to that amendment, because it really doesn't detract from this bill. It doesn't cost anything, if you will, in a legislative sense. It simply changes one terminology to prevent that one loophole from happening. All employment agencies, whether they're 90% permanent, 10% temporary or 90% temporary and 10% permanent, should subscribe to this. No agency should be allowed to charge an applicant a fee.

This bill in a sense sets up the possibility that if you walk into a permanent employment agency or an executive recruiter's, you could still be charged a fee because it's not a temporary agency. This is just silly, and that needs to be changed because, again, where people can save a buck in this economy, they will save a buck, and if this saving of the buck is an attack on the dignity of the worker, they will do it; they have done it and they are doing it. That's our historical experience. So, again, we want to make sure that they can't do it. That's so important.

I've talked about that six-month problem. We don't think it should be there. We don't think that any fee, really, once an employer wants to hire an employee that's in their employ, should be levied. This is a barrier to employment. I can't see that it isn't open to a charter challenge, so really what I challenge employers out there to do is to challenge it. In a sense what I'm suggesting to you is, now that the gentleman's and gentlewoman's agreement is over with Bill 139, or before this bill is passed—even better—simply refuse to pay. Force the agency to then prove that this isn't against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country. Get them to prove it, because I don't think they could, and quite frankly, I don't think there's a legal leg to stand on there. It's simply been the practice of an industry that until now has not been scrutinized. So that's something to look at as well.

Again, in looking at other jurisdictional examples, this is where the dramatic difference between where we are and where we should be is played out fully. Certainly we see where the loopholes are and we've had very graphic examples of that, two in the recent past that I can think of—well, three. Nannies are being exploited still, pregnant women are being fired—all of these have been covered by the Toronto Star—and janitors are subcontracting out, calling somebody a contractor when they're really an employee. All of these things really put the lie to some of the accomplishments that could have been made in Bill 139 but were not.

Having said that, what's good about it? I will say that even though it's the icing and not the cake, it's a step forward. We in the New Democratic Party are going to

support Bill 139; we're going to vote for it. We would have liked to see the amendments put forward. We know how hard the stakeholder groups have worked; we know what they think. They think exactly what I've just said. They want it stronger too. But anything is better than nothing. Really, anything is better than nothing, although it makes my skin crawl to see a Legislature that is full of incrementalists rather than those who really want to take leadership and do something dramatic and something real. This is an incrementalist piece of legislation that takes an inch forward when we need a mile. Even so, an inch is better than not moving at all. Currently, the situation is so bad that Bill 139 looks good in comparison to it. That's the best one can say about it: Currently, the situation is so bad for employees through temporary agencies that this actually starts to look good. Remember, this is really nothing that they haven't had before, 20 years before—just brought back.

I'm going to conclude my statements with that and with thanks to all of those groups. I want to mention a few in particular that deputed, CAW among them, all saying really the same thing—OFL, Make Poverty History, Workers' Action Centre, OCASI, the Chinese Interagency Network of Greater Toronto and others. I've left out many, I'm sure, all saying the same things, all hoping this would be stronger, all wishing it would be stronger, all working to make it stronger, but all at least somewhat gratified that something finally has been done to make the employment standards better in this province. To give it its due, it does make things—reluctantly, I say—somewhat better than they have been.

Stay tuned. In the upcoming months we are working on what we'd like to see happen in the province of Ontario: a revised Employment Standards Act that really does all of those necessary actions that would make our labour force retain its dignity, regain its dignity.

Just to go over them again so that there is no misunderstanding, we need card check certification. We need to make organizing in a collective bargaining way easier because that's where the strength of the worker really lies.

We need equal pay for equal work, for all workers whether they're working four hours or 40 hours, whether they are university professors or janitors.

We need a redefinition of an employee so that we really know that the janitor is an employee and not a subcontractor. They are not contractors; they are employees. Let's call them that and give them the benefits according to that.

No fee ever, whether you're an employment agency or a temporary agency, should be levied for someone looking for a job; no question about that. The six-month fee is silly. It's a barrier to employment. It's subject to a charter challenge, I warrant, again, mainly because it's a barrier to hiring somebody who should be hired at a reasonable pay rate. Equal pay for equal work, by the way, in and of itself would have made Bill 139 redundant.

Of course, we need health care workers included in Bill 139. They should not be excluded. That's silly. We

should they have to wait three years when everybody else gets rights now? We know the answer. The cynical answer is that it's the government that pays them. That needs to come out and that should come out.

Again, we need pay equity with teeth.

Finally and most importantly, none of this is worth the paper it's printed on if there isn't enforcement. Not enforcing employment standards the way they were written to be enforced, the way we enforce any other laws, independent of the complaint of the victim—if you break into a store, it doesn't take the storekeeper to call the police. The police will be there. If you're breaking an employment standards law, employment standards officers should be there, and they should be there preemptively, because we know that abuses are so widespread. If we don't have enforcement, we don't have real laws.

1730

I would ask the Minister of Labour to work on all of those, to bring back to the House, to make sure that we finally have something like that, not just the icing but finally get to sink our teeth into the real cake of employment standards reform.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I listened to the member for Parkdale–High Park. I'd say to the member that the member knows full well that this government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has been championing a modernization of our employment standards here in the province of Ontario.

I want to thank all of the stakeholders who made presentations at committee, in my office, who sent in letters and e-mails about this very important piece of legislation. Many advocacy groups understand the importance that this has on our poverty reduction agenda.

I want to read a couple of comments that came to us from Deena Ladd from the Workers' Action Centre. I know that the member spoke about Deena and about Mary Gellatly from Parkdale Community Legal Services. Here's what Deena Ladd had to say about Bill 139: "These are all the things that many of our members have been speaking up with for years, so this is a good day for our members." She is right.

Just talking about the progress that we've made—back in 2004-05, we established a dedicated employment standards inspection team in this province. They have gone out and made 8,700 inspections. They have collected \$5.5 million in lost wages for workers across Ontario—great progress. If you look back between 1989 and 2003, there were only 97 employment standards prosecutions initiated—97; since 2004, 1,700 prosecutions completed here in this province. That is progress. That is impressive. That is what we're doing, as the McGuinty government is here working with all stakeholders: employees, employers, labour working together—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from the third party is an eloquent speaker and organizes her remarks extremely well. She made some excellent points, not all of which I agree with.

This government seems to have a full press on discouraging people from working in Ontario. To bring in this type of legislation at this particular time, when temp agencies have longer lineups for people seeking employment than they've had in years and years—it goes back into the 1990s since they've had situations like they're in now—and to put further red tape on them, to increase the costs to temp agencies in such a way that is going to drive much of the work that they currently contract for out of the province—this work can be put in almost any province or indeed in any state. Given the distribution and transportation facilities that we have in North America, these types of jobs can find their way into the southern United States, western Canada, eastern Canada. They can find themselves in jurisdictions where it's just simply cheaper to do business. This kind of legislation is going to continue to give advantages to other jurisdictions while it makes Ontario a much less competitive place to do business, and I think that's a sad thing for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Parkdale–High Park has up to two minutes for her reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I know what Deena Ladd and Mary Gollatly say in their comments on the bill. They say this too:

"The bill fails to meet the government's goal of 'removing barriers to permanent employment'...."

"The narrow scope of Bill 139 would still allow temporary staffing and employment agencies to charge workers fees for job placement.

"Special rules proposed for termination and severance of Bill 139 would substantially reduce temporary agency workers' current entitlements."

That's what they also say.

To the Minister of Labour's statistics, which I challenge—I'd love to see those statistics—I simply counter that only 1% of our workplaces ever see an employment standards officer—1%. That's the reality; that's a fact. You can throw out numbers all you want, but if that's the reality, then 99% of workplaces never see an employment standards officer.

Quite frankly, all I would suggest to the minister is to talk, as he did after question period today, to those janitors who are being exploited, to those people out there who are working in precarious employment, to those who are still going to be exploited after the passage of Bill 139 and who do not get redress through the Ministry of Labour. Speak to them. That's all I ask. What you will hear from them is that the system isn't working for them. It's not working for those who are most egregiously hurt by precarious employment. Speak to them.

We certainly heard from them in deputations, and all I suggest again is, take their recommendations and either

put them in the bill or put forward another bill that really makes the strategic amendments to the Employment Standards Act that are actually required.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, it's time to put the question: Mr. Fonseca has moved third reading of Bill 139. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received a deferral slip, pursuant to standing order 28(h), requesting that the vote on Bill 139 be deferred until deferred votes on Monday, May 4, 2009.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1738.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Phillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Hickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Donlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Vitmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Vynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Wakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Wimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Health care

Mr. Jeff Leal.....6443

Environmental protection

Mr. Bob Delaney.....6443

Ontario economy

Mr. Dave Levac.....6443

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on General Government

Mr. David Orazietti.....6444

Report adopted.....6444

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Mr. Pat Hoy.....6444

Report adopted.....6444

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Mining Amendment Act, 2009, Bill 173,

**Mr. Gravelle / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les
mines, projet de loi 173, M. Gravelle**

First reading agreed to.....6444

MOTIONS

Committee membership

Hon. Brad Duguid.....6444

Motion agreed to.....6445

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Mining industry

Hon. Michael Gravelle.....6445

Ontario Police Memorial

Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....6446

Mining industry

Mr. Norm Miller.....6446

Ontario Police Memorial

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....6447

Ontario Police Memorial

Mr. Peter Kormos.....6447

Mining industry

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....6447

Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr. Monte Kwinter.....6448

Mr. Peter Shurman.....6449

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....6450

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....6450

Rail line construction

Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....6451

Ontario budget

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....6451

Interprovincial bridge

Mr. Yasir Naqvi.....6451

Workplace harassment

Mr. Paul Miller.....6451

Cemeteries

Mr. Jeff Leal.....6452

Assistance to farmers

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....6452

School funding

Mr. Phil McNeely.....6452

Hospital services

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....6452

Railroad bridge

Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....6453

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....6453

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Pension plans

Mr. Joe Dickson.....6453

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....6455

Mr. Paul Miller.....6456

Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....6458

Mr. Khalil Ramal.....6459

Mr. Mike Colle.....6459

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....6459

Mr. Joe Dickson.....6460

Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act, 2009, Bill 130, Ms. MacLeod / Loi de 2009 sur les droits des enfants en matière de sécurité et de protection, projet de loi 130, Mme MacLeod

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....6460

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....6462

Mr. Khalil Ramal.....6463

Ms. Sylvia Jones	6464
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....	6465
Mrs. Julia Munro	6466
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	6467
Afghan family law	
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....	6467
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6469
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6470
Mr. Yasir Naqvi.....	6472
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll.....	6472
Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	6473
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	6473
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....	6474
Pension plans	
Motion agreed to.....	6474
Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act, 2009, Bill 130, Ms. MacLeod / Loi de 2009 sur les droits des enfants en matière de sécurité et de protection, projet de loi 130, Mme MacLeod	
The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson).....	6474
Afghan family law	
Motion agreed to.....	6474
Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act, 2009, Bill 130, Ms. MacLeod / Loi de 2009 sur les droits des enfants en matière de sécurité et de protection, projet de loi 130, Mme MacLeod	
Second reading negatived.....	6475

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2009, Bill 139, Mr. Fonseca / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (agences de placement temporaire), projet de loi 139, M. Fonseca	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6475
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6481
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6481
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6481
Third reading vote deferred	6482

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 30 April 2009 / Jeudi 30 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 152, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2009 sur la réduction de la pauvreté, projet de loi 152, Mme Matthews

Hon. Deborah Matthews	6421
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	6422
Mr. Michael Prue	6423
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6424
Mr. David Zimmer	6424
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6424
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6424
Mr. Michael Prue	6425
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	6431

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6431
------------------------	------

Anniversary of legislative staff

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6431
---------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Infectious disease control

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	6431
Hon. David Caplan	6431

Infectious disease control

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	6432
Hon. David Caplan	6432

Automotive industry

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6433
Hon. Michael Bryant	6433

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6434
Hon. George Smitherman	6434

Energy rates

Mr. John Yakabuski	6435
Hon. George Smitherman	6435

Infectious disease control

Mme France Gélinas	6435
Hon. David Caplan	6436

Skilled trades

Mr. Charles Sousa	6436
Hon. Michael Chan	6436
Hon. John Milloy	6437

Smoking cessation

Mr. Toby Barrett	6437
Hon. Margaret R. Best	6437
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	6437

Protection for workers

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6437
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6438

Tourism

Mr. Pat Hoy	6438
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6438

Travel industry

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6439
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	6439

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller	6439
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6439

Road safety

Mr. Lou Rinaldi	6440
Hon. James J. Bradley	6440

Apprenticeship training

Mr. Norm Miller	6441
Hon. John Milloy	6441

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci	6441
----------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Hayward Gordon Ltd.

Mr. Ted Arnott	6441
----------------------	------

Hockey championship

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey	6441
--------------------------	------

Hospital services

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6442
-------------------------	------

Rail line construction

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6442
------------------------	------

Poverty

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6442
--------------------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	6442
--------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

A20N1
X1
D23



No. 144

N° 144

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

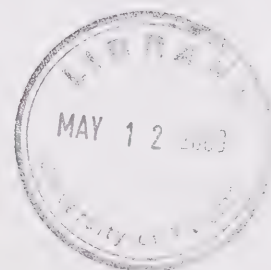
First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Monday 4 May 2009

Lundi 4 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mai 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence, of inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to introduce some special guests we have in the House today, some of the finest researchers in our province. We're joined today by Dr. Barry Saville, from Trent; Dr. Christian Burks, from the Ontario Genomics Institute; Dr. Lou Siminovich, from the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute; Dr. Janet Rossant, from Sick Kids; Dr. Mick Bhatia, from McMaster. We also have Dr. John Dick and Dr. Gordon Keller, from Toronto; as well as Dr. Steven Rothstein, from Guelph; Dr. Molly Shoichet, from U of T; and my deputy minister, George Ross. I hope all members would welcome them to the House.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House Paul Norris, who is from the township of Nipissing. His son Dr. Trevor Norris will be with us shortly. They are here in support of the Commanda Community Centre, and we appreciate their being here. We'll be having lunch today and a tour of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Huron-Bruce and page Corey Davidson, I'd like to welcome his mother, Tammy Davidson, his grandmother, Beatie Rau, and his grandfather, Mik Rau, sitting in the east members' gallery today. Welcome.

Hon. John Wilkinson: We've also been joined by Dr. Tom Hudson, who is the CEO and chief science officer of the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. Welcome, Tom.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On a point of order, Speaker: I ask unanimous consent for the members of the Legislature to wear the green ribbon denoting Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, which began yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. This morning we heard the real story confirming

what the Progressive Conservative caucus and working people of this province have been concerned about since the Minister of Finance leaked information prior to his record-breaking deficit budget. The new McGuinty sales tax is a revenue-grabbing, job-killing, middle-class-punishing tax.

"New Tax Threatens 21,000 Construction Jobs." That's the headline from the Building Industry and Land Development Association's press release this morning. Their report on the new McGuinty sales tax can be summed up by their view that it is "as unfair as it is contradictory."

Premier, is the report they brought forward wrong, and if not, what measures are you prepared to take to make sure that your massive tax hike isn't going to hurt consumers and hurt the housing industry?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I have not had time to review the report. I look forward to taking a look at it; it obviously presents a very interesting perspective on this. We have a slightly different one.

Just to introduce more numbers into this without unduly confusing Ontarians, in 2008, 257,000 homes were sold in Ontario, and 3% of those, or 8,400, would have been subject to the full single sales tax in Ontario. Three per cent cost \$500,000 or more and were newly built. What we are doing is protecting 97% of Ontario home purchases. We think that's fair.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, the Premier should read that report, because it puts the lie to some of those statistics, especially in terms of the GTA.

This is a third-party report from an organization that is a leader in the building and renovation industry, as well as in consumer protection. They contend that your whopping sales tax increase "cannot avoid having negative repercussions on the demand for new homes...." The report points out that your new tax will "ultimately result in less new residential construction, less contractor renovation spending and a shift to renovations ... done through the underground economy." The report also indicates that even a slight decline in construction equates to as many as 21,200 lost construction jobs.

Premier, what guarantees can you give concerned Ontarians, going forward, that job losses will not result from your new sales tax?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's important to understand that we've chosen to help the 97% of families who buy either resale homes or new homes under half a million dollars.

I think it's important to take a look at the experience they had in the Atlantic provinces when they brought in their single sales tax: Nova Scotia saw a 16% increase in home sales over three years; New Brunswick saw a 12% increase in home sales over three years. We appreciate the great work that is done by our new home builders in the province of Ontario, but I think they understand, as do Ontarians, that the package of tax reforms that we put in place is absolutely essential and that we're being as fair as we possibly can as we move forward with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier cites other jurisdictions, but he himself says that Ontario is facing the greatest economic challenges it has faced in 80 years.

We have major leaders in the home building, renovation, sale and resale industries that are rightfully concerned about the implications of this new tax. The Ontario Home Builders' Association says that the residential construction industry provides some 368,000 Ontario jobs and contributes \$38 billion to the Ontario economy. The Ontario Real Estate Association—their industry provides 110,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Premier, your new tax is a full-bore attack on Ontarians who work in and depend on these industries. Will you listen to their concerns, pay heed to your words of a year ago and admit this is the wrong time to move forward with an ill-advised plan to, yet again, increase taxes on already struggling Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to remind my honourable colleague, as he well knows, the package of tax reforms that we're putting in place will cost the Ontario treasury money. I think he knows that, and he has had the opportunity to verify that.

As well, I think Ontarians need to understand that we're doing something that needs to be done, and we're being as fair as we possibly can in every single sector. This protects 97% of Ontario family home purchases. Only 3% are going to be subject to the full single sales tax; that's for new homes valued at over \$500,000—over half a million dollars.

Finally, if the leader of the official opposition represents a party that is so violently and viscerally opposed to our new single sales tax, you would think they might commit to undoing it, should they ever earn the privilege of serving Ontarians. The fact of the matter is, they're going to keep this because they know it's the right thing to do.

1040

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We'll make our commitments at the appropriate time, and it won't be on the advice of the Premier, the current leader of the Liberal Party.

My question is back to the Premier. This afternoon, MPPs will be debating a Conservative motion regarding the McGuinty sales tax, a tax that will have massively

negative effects on Ontarians looking to sell, purchase or even rent a home. The new sales tax will hit Ontarians renovating their homes, including installing energy-efficient windows, furnaces or insulation; repairing the roof; adding a room for a senior to live in; and painting a child's bedroom. Those are just a few of the extensive list of items the Premier's new tax will hit.

Can you explain why you are bringing forward massive taxes on the building, renovation and real estate industries, knowing that they are a pillar of the economy and one of the keys to getting Ontario out of recession?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: You may recall that my honourable colleague has, on several occasions, quoted to me Roger Martin, who is the dean of the Rotman School of Management and the chair of the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity. This was his reaction to our budget: "The recent Ontario budget represents an exceedingly important step forward with its bold tax measures that will benefit all Ontarians. Businesses, consumers and families should be delighted with the leadership this government has shown." Again, that comes from Roger Martin, a figure of authority quoted on several occasions by my honourable colleague.

Our budget has also been supported by the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, the chamber of commerce, the Toronto Board of Trade, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the public school boards, the College Student Alliance; I could go on and on and on. There is broad—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The reality is that the Premier has been all over the map on this issue. Not that long ago, Premier, you said that you'd have to be crazy to raise taxes in a recession. You added that even the NDP wouldn't do that. It's exactly what you are doing now, with your record-breaking sales tax increase on things like real estate services, legal fees, closing costs and moving costs. We agree with your earlier view, Premier: This is the wrong time to be implementing what is being referred to by major industry leaders, including the Building Industry and Land Development Association, as a job-killing policy.

Premier, are you telling us the experts are wrong, misguided and don't know what they're talking about?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just quoted Roger Martin, an expert who has been cited on several occasions by my honourable colleague, and I quoted from a number of other organizations that have an interest in strengthening the economy.

The fact of the matter is we're bringing a balanced approach to the people's future through our budget. We are reducing corporate income taxes and, at the same time we're increasing the Ontario child benefit. We're reducing the small business corporate tax rate, and at the same time we're increasing the minimum wage. We're eliminating the small business clawback, and at the same time we're reducing income taxes on the lowest-income earners to the lowest level in Canada. What's more, we

continue to invest in affordable housing, in health care, education, post-secondary education and research and innovation. It is a balanced approach that is designed, in the long term, to improve prosperity, create jobs and make of us a continuing, caring society.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think it's fair to say there's growing opposition to the latest McGuinty tax grab, despite your attempts to suggest otherwise. I just want to give you a few quotes, Premier. The Ontario Real Estate Association said, "A harmonized sales tax is yet another cash grab on Ontario's already overtaxed homeowners." Hugh Heron, of Heathwood Homes, said, "This is a bad deal for us. This is a tax grab." The London Home Builders' Association said, "We lobby against any increases in taxes that unfairly raise the price of a new home or renovations and jeopardize ... jobs."

Premier, why are you ignoring the concerns of industries and professionals committed to advocating on behalf of consumers? In effect, what you're doing is giving them the back of your hand.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say again why it is that the official opposition will keep this new tax in place. They are violently and viscerally opposed to it, but they do not intend to repeal it, and let me tell you why that is. It's because we've been very determined to put this in place in the fairest way possible: 97% of Ontario families who buy either resale homes or new homes under \$500,000 will not be affected by this tax.

I think that the leader of the official opposition in his heart of hearts understands that at this particular time, in the face of such a tremendous economic challenge, we're called upon to provide leadership. Inaction is not an option. We are moving forward. We're doing something which we know is absolutely essential to strengthening our economy and making sure we have the capacity to continue to support good schools, good health care and good investment in research and innovation, for example. Those are the kinds of things that we will continue to move forward with. He knows that. Unfortunately, he doesn't have the courage—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. The leader of the third party.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. It's becoming increasingly clear that this Premier's HST tax grab is anti-jobs and anti-growth. Today, the Building Industry and Land Development Association has issued a report which says that the HST tax grab threatens 21,200 construction jobs and will cost new homebuyers at least \$300 million.

How much more evidence does this Premier need before he does the right thing and reverses course on the HST tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's worth hearing from the Provincial Building and Construction Trades

Council of Ontario in their reaction to our budget. They said, "This unprecedented investment in our infrastructure will not only help Ontario's competitive position but will create jobs and sustain employment in the construction industry.... The government is investing in our future at a time that the construction industry has the capacity to meet the demand. The creation of these construction jobs will allow the industry to be better prepared when the economy turns around. There is no better time to make these kinds of investments." The fact of the matter is our budget is all about jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The industry study says that this Premier's HST tax grab will disproportionately affect new housing in the greater Toronto area. More than one third of all new homes sold in the GTA cost more than \$400,000. Even a 10% reduction in demand due to the job-killing HST is going to mean construction of 7,400 fewer units in the GTA. That would result in more than \$1 billion in lost wages for construction workers here.

Why won't this Premier realize that he has made a mistake and immediately withdraw his job-killing HST tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we just have a slightly different perspective on this. I think that people watching this have an understanding that what we're trying to do, more than anything else, is to be fair here. When you can say to 97% of Ontario families who are buying either resale homes or new homes under \$500,000 that we're being fair to them, and that only 3% of Ontario homes—that's 8,400 out of 250,000—will be subject to the full single sales tax, I think that's a pretty good saw-off. When you have 97% on one side and 3% who are buying homes at half a million dollars or more, and we protected those who are buying homes at half a million or less, I think we've been pretty fair. We're proud to put that before the Ontario people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Simply put, this is the wrong tax at the wrong time. The construction sector in this province is already reeling. New housing demand has fallen precipitously in the past year. Many homes, because of this tax grab, are going to be subject to at least another \$25,000 in taxes, further weakening the demand.

There are 360,000 GTA construction workers. Why is the Premier insisting on playing Russian roulette with these workers, their jobs and their families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that experience on the ground is helpful in these circumstances. When they brought this into place in the Atlantic provinces, Nova Scotia saw a 16% increase in home sales over three years, and New Brunswick saw a 12% increase in their new home sales over three years. Experience tells us that it is different than the views that have been represented by the opposition.

If we stand back for a moment, given the nature of the economic challenge before us, I think what Ontarians expect of us is to find a way to move forward and do that

in a way that is as fair as possible. At the end of the day, they're looking for some leadership. That's what we are demonstrating through our budget. We will not be caught up in the inaction put forward by the members of the opposition. I think it's important for us to keep moving forward.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: I'm glad he is talking about economic challenges and moving forward. I spent the weekend in northern Ontario, and where I went, the stories were absolutely bleak. Workers are worried about the disappearance of their jobs, particularly in the forestry sector. Young people are worried about the future. Social service providers, counselling services and food banks are all overwhelmed. And there's an overwhelming sense as well that the McGuinty government simply doesn't give a damn about what's happening in northern Ontario.

I want to know, when will this Premier and this government finally step up for the people of northern Ontario?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm proud of the efforts that we continue to make to support every region in this province.

I too had the opportunity to visit the great north. You cannot help but be impressed by the work ethic and determination and the success that has been experienced by so many of our Ontario communities. They have some special challenges and, as well, they have some special opportunities.

We continue to find new ways to support the forestry sector, for example. We continue to find new ways to bring stability and certainty to the mining sector, which is so important to many folks in the north.

As well, the fact of the matter is that when I talk to families in the north, they're saying, "Whatever you do, please continue to find ways to fund our schools, our hospitals and our social programs." And again, our budget speaks to those basic priorities for Ontario families.

If you take a look at our budget, whether it's for families living in the north or any other part of this province, it is balanced. It invests in ensuring that there are more opportunities for business development in the province of Ontario, as well—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Platitudes about work ethic and determination do not put food on the table for northern Ontario families. People there are worried sick about jobs, they're worried sick about their pensions, and now they're worried sick about having to sell everything that they own. You know why? Because their EI has run out, and the only way they can collect social assistance is by selling everything off.

How does this Premier explain his government's hands-off approach to these Ontarians and their families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We can have all kinds of differences, and that's important and healthy in a vibrant democracy, but I know that I can make common cause with my colleague on this particular issue.

When it comes to employment insurance, Ontarians remain the subject of some discrimination when it comes to the federal distribution of employment insurance benefits. If you lose your job in Ontario, you get about \$4,000 less by way of employment insurance benefits than you do in any other part of the country. It takes longer to qualify, and when you do qualify, you get less money.

Surely when it comes to this particular matter, my colleague and I can make common cause and we can continue to pressure the federal government, and all parties that have the privilege of serving Canadians on Parliament Hill, to bring fairness to Ontario workers and to ensure that we enjoy the same benefits for our employment insurance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Surely this Premier understands that asset liquidation is absolutely the wrong thing for these families when they're going to have to move to social assistance because their EI isn't there. That's one thing on which I hope he would agree with me.

If he was serious about northern Ontario, he'd quit playing games with the Toronto Transit Commission's new streetcar contract. That contract is going to sustain hundreds of jobs at Bombardier for many years to come.

What this Premier would do, if he was serious, is ensure that every last cent of the forestry sector prosperity fund got spent on forestry jobs. Three quarters of the fund hasn't even been spent, while thousands and thousands of jobs are vanishing in the north.

When will this Premier finally display some leadership and do everything he can to get northern Ontario workers working again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of public transit, what we want to do, as much as we possibly can, is ensure that what is a win for the people in the GTA and Hamilton is also a win for people living in other parts of the province. We will continue to find ways to work with the city of Toronto and others when it comes to doing what we can to help those dollars flow into benefits for the people of Ontario.

Now, it's kind of strange, coming from my honourable colleague, given that her predecessor was opposed to those investments in public transit here in the GTA which could stand to benefit folks living in Thunder Bay, for example, working at the Bombardier plant.

As I say, we will continue to find ways to work with our partners in the GTA. We want to ensure, as much as we possibly can, that those new investments—\$9 billion plus of new investments in public transit—stand to benefit Ontario workers as much as possible.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. On Thursday, London Economics International released

their report examining the potential costs of Ontario's Green Energy Act. They've confirmed what we've been saying all along, that it will significantly increase the price of electricity in the province of Ontario. In fact, they're saying that by the time the act is fully implemented, it will raise the cost for a household by \$1,200 per year, and that does not include your sales tax that you're planning on levying next year.

We all understand, Premier, the importance of green energy and how we have to invest in that. What is equally important is being honest and straight with the people about what the implementation of any act is going to cost them. Will you now, with the release of this report, be straight with the people of Ontario and tell them what the cost to families and households will be under your green energy disguise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to this issue. I know that Ontarians are very interested in their government providing leadership when it comes to addressing climate change and, as well, speaking to the cost of their electricity. That's a real issue; there's no doubt about it.

Our best advice that we're getting tells us that we can expect prices to go up about 1% a year, but one of the ways that we're going to keep overall costs down is to do as much as we can to drive energy conservation and create more and more opportunities for both businesses and homeowners to use less electricity, to use their existing electricity in a more efficient manner. That's the approach that we want to bring. I think Ontarians want us to do that. They want us to find a way to generate electricity that is cleaner and less harmful to the environment but at the same time puts as little cost pressure on them as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, that best advice, I'm sure, is coming from the same people who told you that you could close the coal plants by 2007.

Your minister continues to bluster and blather and take that same message out, hoping that if he repeats it over and over again, people will actually believe it. He wants them to believe that you can invest billions and billions of dollars and, "Buddy, it ain't going to cost you a dime." People don't buy that. They don't believe it. Not a single person outside of your own government says that.

LEI says that's not going to happen. London Economics International is an internationally respected and recognized organization that does this forecasting for a business. They say it's going to cost \$1,200 per year per household once this is fully implemented. If you have other evidence, then do what they've done—a 67-page report that takes information from your sources: the OPA, the IPSP. They're not inventing numbers. If you've got other numbers, release the report so that people know—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is a report, and I don't have that perspective.

I think we can speak to some fundamental truths which we all share, that over time the price of oil and gas is going to go up, and there is a very strong consensus that over time the price of renewables will come down. We're moving away from oil and gas and coal and we're moving towards more and more renewables. We're moving away from those things which we know are going to go up in price; we're moving towards those things which we know will go down in price. At the same time, we're creating more and more opportunities for homeowners and businesses alike, and for our hospitals and schools as well, to find ways to conserve energy, to use electricity in a more efficient manner. We're convinced we're moving forward in the best way, and our best information is that we're talking about increases of about 1% a year.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Hamilton Spectator published an excellent series of articles by reporter Denise Davy on children's mental health. Not only did the articles show that Ontario lags in its provision of children's mental health services and has 25,000 children needing help—45% are not getting it. They focused on innovative programs in other jurisdictions that do a much better job than the McGuinty government in serving children with mental illness. As this is the start of Children's Mental Health Week, what exactly is this government doing for the 25,000 children needing mental health services in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is Children's Mental Health Week, and I'm glad that so many members in this Legislature are wearing the green ribbon to acknowledge and commemorate that.

I can assure you that children's mental health is a very high priority for this government. We are working hard to improve services for children and for their families. In 2006, we released Ontario's first-ever policy framework on children's mental health. It's called A Shared Responsibility. In it, we talk about how important it is that we actually develop a provincial strategy for children's mental health that acknowledges the importance of the integration of services. We are moving forward on the implementation of that strategy. We've set out a 10-year plan, and I will be happy in the supplementary to talk about some of the initiatives within it.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A framework doesn't affect the thousands and thousands of children in this province that are in crisis right now, not 10 years from now.

The McGuinty government's own studies, such as the roots of violence report, recommend major investments in children's mental health—not in 10 years, but right now. The minister is aware that a very successful website called mindyourmind.ca shut down Friday because the McGuinty government won't fund this highly effective

mental health strategy for children and youth, which was developed by Family Service Thames Valley, and which I'm sure the minister is very well aware of.

My question is this: If the minister fails to find outside funders within one month, as she has already pledged to this particular organization, will she promise here today that the McGuinty government will step in with full funding for mindyourmind.ca, a program that should never have been allowed to be in jeopardy in the first place in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just would like to remind the member opposite that when their government was in power, they froze spending for children's mental health. We do not take lessons from you on funding for children's mental health agencies.

Unlike you, we are investing in the potential of these kids. We are moving forward on the implementation of this strategy.

I'd like to mention a couple of areas where differences are already being felt. One of those is telepsychiatry. We have made major investments in telepsychiatry, which is providing mental health services to kids in their home communities, improving the number of kids who can receive that professional help they need. And we are working very closely with the Ministry of Education on the student support leadership program, which actually moves us forward to integrate services between those very important institutions that children rely on for help.

We are moving forward and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I feel one of this government's great environmental achievements in the first term was protecting over 1.8 million acres in the greenbelt. Members in my riding of Ajax-Pickering are very supportive of the provincially designated greenbelt, as they know it permanently protects lands and supports a healthier environment for all Ontarians.

I'm concerned by the recent talk amongst the PC leadership campaigns and their lack of support for the greenbelt. Many of my constituents enjoy spending time with their families, going out and relaxing and exploring the vast agriculture of land and green spaces that we've protected here in Ontario forever.

For the benefit of the House, could the Minister please inform us about some of the recent activities within the greenbelt and its value to our province?

Hon. Jim Watson: I too share concern about the PC leadership candidates who are going around the province talking about their lack of support for the greenbelt. This is one of the greatest initiatives any government in the history of Ontario has gotten involved with, protecting 1.8 million acres of green space in perpetuity.

The David Suzuki Foundation estimates that ecological services and benefits provided by the greenbelt are valued at \$2.6 billion per year. Friends of the Greenbelt

president Burkhard Mausberg estimates that that amounts to over \$10 billion in benefits since the greenbelt's inception. A recent poll that was conducted by Environics indicated 93% of Ontarians support the greenbelt.

I would encourage the Conservative leadership candidates to stand up and support the greenbelt, and speak out in favour of preserving this valuable, natural piece of our heritage.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: We know we only have one earth, one home, and that it is our duty as legislators in this province to protect, preserve and restore our planet for the generations to follow. Ontarians are concerned about their environment. We know now more than ever the urgency of action required by us to preserve the environment.

I'm proud of the work our government has done to protect and restore our environment, from safeguarding our drinking water through the Clean Water Act and new drinking water inspectors to tackling pollution through the "You spill, you pay" law and our current initiatives to reduce toxics and increase waste diversion.

We recently celebrated the implementation of the cosmetic pesticides ban to protect our families. I was concerned to learn that one of the leadership candidates for the official opposition is proposing to strike down that law. Could the minister please clarify for the members of this House the importance of that legislation?

Hon. Jim Watson: To the Honourable Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We don't agree with that candidate at all. We think that the ban is all about protecting our families, especially our kids, from unnecessary risk. That's why we've banned 250 different substances and 80 different ingredients, as far as using them on your front lawns back yards are concerned.

The act also sets clear and transparent rules around this province. We concur with the comments that were made, for example, by David Suzuki, who himself said, "We congratulate the Ontario government for raising the bar on protecting people and the environment from needless pesticide exposure," as well as Peter Goodhand, the CEO of the Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society, who said, "We congratulate the government for passing regulations that will provide all Ontarians with strong protection.... This is a significant success in our efforts to further our mission to eradicate cancer."

We don't agree with that leadership candidate and we don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Frank Giannone, president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, has expressed concern that, "A harmonized sales tax will drive many renovators and some home builders to the underground economy."

Premier, do you believe that your increased sales taxes on the building and renovation industry will put people in a position where they prefer cash and feel it's acceptable to resort to illegal and underground trades?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, we don't agree with that. What we believe—and it's borne out as the Premier indicated to the House earlier today—is that only about 7% of new home purchases will be impacted as a result of this. We've laid out a very generous tax credit, more generous than the GST credit on new home purchases. Again, we believe that the overall impact of the government's budgetary policy will, in fact, help the economy to grow. We will get back to growth with the right mix of policies. It's simply not enough to sit on the status quo and do nothing. We have to take appropriate measures to get this economy moving again. We have the right package of tax incentives and we think that when this is fully implemented, Ontario will continue to grow and will see stronger growth than it has in many years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The Premier seems to have been unable to answer the question and the finance minister didn't get it right. This is what the Premier said in opposition: "Just try to get a price on something in the Ottawa area, for instance, try to get the price for some work done on your roof, some plumbing, some guy to do the driveway or whatever. They'll always have two prices, and one is remarkably lower than the other. That's because ... it has become acceptable ... for people to consider that they no longer have to abide by our laws. That is because people have lost faith in the government's ability to properly manage the moneys that it's already receiving and they have no tolerance whatsoever for any more taxes." That was Premier McGuinty in 1994.

Premier, in opposition you appeared to be against the underground economy. Do you not understand that your new sales taxes will encourage that behaviour?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government's tax reform package will help grow this economy. It will help get us through this deep, deep international recession. I would remind the member opposite that the tax reform package we have brought forward has been endorsed by a whole range of groups as being the right step to take in this economy. Seven per cent of new-home purchases will be affected by this. As the Premier indicated earlier, we have worked to make sure that 93% of new and resale homes are not affected.

The member opposite would have us do nothing. Doing nothing is not an option. We have brought forward a package of tax reforms that will lower overall taxes, reduce revenue to government, and help growth come back to this economy to create jobs and fund our hospitals and schools in a way they haven't been in many years.

NURSES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The Ontario

Nurses' Association reported today that hospitals are not replacing retiring nurses or those on maternity or disabled leave. They counted at least 800 nursing positions that have been eliminated since last fall, while the workload continues to increase, this at the time when the health care system is already stretched to the limit and has lost any surge capacity.

In light of increasing workload, loss of surge capacity and the international pandemic alert, why is this government not hiring the 9,000 nurses that it promised in the last election?

1110

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question because it is an important one. I know that our partners at the Ontario Nurses' Association want to see more nurses in our health care system. So do I. That's why this government has hired almost 10,000 nurses since coming to office in 2003, and we're continuing to hire nurses; in fact, we're hiring 900 more this year. We will need more nurses as our baby boom population retires. We're not just going to need them in hospitals. Jobs are available for nurses throughout the health care sector, including long-term care and community health centres. If you were to go to Workopolis today, you would find more than 400 nursing jobs have been posted on that job site in the last two months alone.

The member presents some information in her preamble which is not correct. In fact, Ontario has surge—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, nurses do look at Workopolis. There are 427 jobs on there; half of them are from last year. People who posted in July 2008 have no intention of filling those up. You click on the link and go to the actual health care providers, and they don't have job postings on their website; it's only old, part-time or in home care, which pay so poorly and don't pay for travel that no nurses want those jobs.

This put aside, last week people from across rural Ontario came to Queen's Park to protest services cut at their community hospitals, including emergency room closures. We are reading and hearing of more and more hospitals being filled to capacity and of nurses' positions being left unfilled. In my own community, the CEO of Sudbury Regional Hospital says that layoffs are inevitable.

My question is, while the World Health Organization is set to declare a worldwide influenza pandemic, how can this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. David Caplan: I'm very proud of the work that we've done to support nurses, to increase positions within hospitals, within long-term care or within the community. We've made Ontario one of the few jurisdictions in the world to guarantee a full-time job opportunity to every nursing graduate. We've opened Ontario's first nurse-led clinic—and I hope the member will support it—in the community of Sudbury that she represents.

We've just recently announced the site for three additional nurse practitioner-led clinics in Sault Ste. Marie, in Thunder Bay and in Belle River.

I quote the president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario: "There is a tremendous need for better access to primary care in these communities and today's announcement is the answer that thousands of people have been waiting for." In fact, more than 5,000 new nursing graduates have been matched to guaranteed job opportunity through the program; 76% of new graduates reported full-time employment. No, there's a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last week, you tabled a bill entitled the Mining Amendment Act. The proposed legislation is very important, since the mining industry in Ontario is a vital component of our economy. Last year, Ontario led the country in exploration expenditures and mineral production, valued at over \$9 billion, and the current Mining Act is outdated. Ontario needs to bring it up to the 21st century so that we can continue our tradition of being a province with a vibrant mining industry.

Minister, when you introduced legislation last week, you assured Ontarians that the proposed legislation would promote a balanced development that would benefit all Ontarians. Could you please elaborate on the proposed legislation and tell the House how you have created balanced legislation.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member from Huron-Bruce for the question. Thanks to the efforts of our six-month consultation process, I believe we have succeeded in drafting balanced legislation. To do so, we've relied on input from all our stakeholders: certainly individual First Nations, aboriginal organizations, mining companies, exploration companies, prospectors, communities from across the province and many, many interested citizens.

Since tabling Bill 173 last Thursday, I'm happy to report that we have received positive feedback from various groups who have a stake in the Mining Act.

For instance, Garry Clark, the executive director of the Ontario Prospectors Association, has said, "As explorationists we believe these changes will provide certainty around access to land, which will allow us to attract investment to Ontario."

Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, leader of the First Nations of the Anishinabek Nation, has said this is "respectful to the recognition of First Nations rights and indicative of Ontario's commitment to working with"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Minister. You must be very proud of the positive feedback that you have received on the proposed legislation from the prospectors' association and Grand Chief Beaucage.

Minister, I understand that the proposed changes to the Mining Act would see significant strides in aboriginal consultation and would address the key concerns of the aboriginal communities—certainly a vital component of the proposed legislation. I also understand that last week our government made an announcement for a resource benefits sharing plan with the aboriginal communities by committing \$30 million as a set-aside to demonstrate our commitment toward this initiative.

Will the minister please elaborate on this plan and inform the House how the changes to the Mining Act as well as our government's commitment to resource benefits sharing will promote economic development opportunities for our aboriginal communities across Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Last week marked some significant and, I would argue, even historic steps in our improved relationship with aboriginal communities in this province. In addition to incorporating aboriginal consultation directly into mining legislation and regulations, the proposed new legislation will also include the introduction of a dispute resolution process for aboriginal-related issues in mining. This unique consultation process was the most intimate government-to-government consultation process ever conducted in Ontario between a provincial government and First Nations people. We listened closely to our aboriginal partners during the consultation phase of this process.

I think these proposed changes to the Mining Act as well as our commitment to resource benefits sharing will lead to increased access to economic development opportunities for aboriginal communities in this province.

We're currently in discussions with First Nations leadership through the Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Last year he made a written promise to my constituent Mark Douglas, Mark the painter, that he would—and I quote from the minister's letter—"not agree to harmonizing with the GST if that would increase the tax burden on Ontario taxpayers." Today we learned that the Dalton sales tax will mean an \$800-million tax increase for Ontario taxpayers. How can the minister explain his embarrassing about-face on this important public policy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, we don't agree with the numbers as laid out in terms of the impact on new houses.

To answer the member's question specifically, I did write to a number of people at the time. We adopted the single sales tax when the federal government, led by Jim Flaherty, provided \$4.3 billion to Ontario to help us implement this new tax. I would remind the member opposite that a number of analysts whom they have often

quoted in the past, including Jack Mintz, have called for us to do this.

Only 7% of new home purchases in Ontario will be affected by this single sales tax because of the very generous home purchase credit that we've been able to provide.

I'd remind the member opposite that this is taken as part of a broader range of tax changes that will actually—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The minister's statements today will not reassure Ontario families who dream of owning their own home.

Half of my riding, the town of Halton Hills, is in the GTA. The Dalton sales tax on homes will hit hardest in the GTA, where houses cost the most. For example, I'm told the average sale price of a home in Oakville was \$531,000 last month. Today's Toronto Star quotes an authoritative report: The DST will cost GTA purchasers \$575 million more—a massive tax increase.

I've received scores of e-mails from my constituents expressing outrage, and the minister is receiving them too. They also point out that the new DST will be levied on legal fees, appraisals, real estate commissions, home inspection fees, moving costs and other services.

Will this minister now admit that his broken promise will mean broken dreams for families across the province?

1120

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, this tax package will help get Ontario through the roughest economic patch we have experienced in close to 80 years.

I'd remind the member opposite, we simply don't agree with the numbers that were published today: 89% of homes sold in the GTA, new homes or resale, are under \$400,000 and would not be affected. Accordingly, we believe this is the right policy for the times.

I simply don't share the member's view. It's not enough just to continue to do what we've been doing. That's why we've brought forward a comprehensive package of tax reform that will lower taxes for most Ontarians, and it will protect new homebuyers here in the GTA and indeed right across the province.

STUDENT GRANTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The question is to the Premier. The fact that Ontario universities are 10th in per capita funding has resulted in larger class sizes, fewer tenured profs and soaring tuition fees. Students are graduating with an average debt loan of \$23,000 and up.

On top of all this, you're going back on your promise and taking away the last little thing left for thousands of students. The textbook and technology grant and the distance grant will be taken away from the majority of students. The tiny, little textbook incentive was supposed to grow, not be snatched away. Now students in rural areas will face one more obstacle to their education. Why

are you taking away one of the few things you gave university students?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to acknowledge the truth in the conclusion of the question put forward by my colleague, when he said that our textbook and technology and distance grant is something that our government put in place for the first time. We did that just last year, and we're proud of that. We're now staring into the face of a worldwide recession, and we've had to make some adjustments. Some of those were not the kinds of things we warmly embrace, but we've got to act responsibly. So what we've done is changed it. There has been a reduction, that is true, but 72% of students who received the textbook and technology grant last year will receive it this year, and 94% of the students who received the distance grant last year will receive it this year.

We've had to trim things a little bit, given our financial circumstances, and we've tried to do that in a way that is fair. Given the overall nature of our budget, we are convinced that we're going to turn the corner, generate more prosperity and be able to fully fund these kinds of programs in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are 10 provinces, and we are last in per capita funding and facing a litany of woes. First, university departments facing cutbacks across the board; fewer tenured positions; soaring tuition fees; graduates who can't find jobs; and students defaulting on their loans. The textbook and distance grants were the only real help students got from your government. How can you take them away, especially at this time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have done more than just put in place brand new textbook and technology and distance grants, which I believe are the first of their kind in the country. We have more than doubled student assistance since 2004. We've almost tripled the number of grants; now one in four students, approximately 120,000, are receiving non-repayable grants. And we restored grants. The NDP eliminated grants for our students.

What we did just yesterday, and I'm proud of this, is that we announced a new program—not a new program, but the expansion of an existing program. We announced another \$32 million to help 100,000 students find summer jobs; 27,000 thousand more students will participate over last year. We've increased funding for the summer job program by 57% over last year.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Rick Johnson: Celebrating Ontario's distinct cultural heritage is an important part of preserving our shared history. Heritage sites in large and small communities across Ontario trace the history of our province from its early beginnings to the vibrant, modern-day society in which we live today.

Conserving our heritage and promoting our links to the past is something that the government should actively advance in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. There are many heritage buildings, like Frost

House in Lindsay, once the home of Premier Leslie Frost, the Lindsay Fire Hall, and the Dominion Hotel in Minden, that tell the stories of our communities.

Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what the government is doing to promote Ontario's built cultural heritage?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Promoting Ontario's rich cultural heritage is a very important part of my ministry's mandate. The Ontario Heritage Trust, which is an agency of the ministry, launched the eighth annual Doors Open Ontario, which is the province's premier contribution on built heritage.

This celebration once again opens the doors of hundreds of unique architectural and heritage buildings through 48 Doors Open events right across the province. It allows the public to explore fascinating places, and to do so free of charge, which I think is a nice thing to be able to do in the summertime. They can go to places to which they would not normally have access. As we celebrate Ontario's heritage treasures, we celebrate our history. We have the opportunity to go to courthouses, places of worship, schools and even commercial buildings that are incredibly unique.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Doors Open Ontario will certainly help Ontarians learn more about Ontario's built heritage and raise public awareness of how important it is to celebrate our past. I am delighted that the Ontario Heritage Trust continues to fulfill its mandate to identify, preserve, protect and promote Ontario's built culture and natural heritage through programs such as this one.

In recent years, Ontarians have expressed a passion for the preservation and promotion of our historic past and its place in our future. I personally believe that we need to know where we come from to know where we're going. Doors Open Ontario, taking place in Lindsay and Minden and 46 other locations in Ontario, will help accomplish this goal. A modern society such as ours must devote more resources to agencies such as the Ontario Heritage Trust so they can carry out their mandate and inspire more Ontarians to cherish our historic legacy.

Can the minister tell this House what the government is doing to strengthen the capacity of the Ontario Heritage Trust?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I am very grateful indeed for the questions from that fresh voice from the Kawarthas, a voice that is hugely supportive of what we do in the Ministry of Culture and understands indeed what a program like this means to the Kawarthas as well as to the rest of the province.

The Ontario Heritage Trust continues to work with communities such as the Kawarthas and with other partners right across the province in order to compel a better recognition, perhaps, of the value of promoting our built heritage for current and for future generations. We have increased the funding to the Ontario Heritage Trust by \$1.6 million, which brings it to \$4.2 million. This is in ongoing recognition of the invaluable work of the OHT and all of the programs, such as Doors Open, that they make available to the citizens—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier again. The Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association is very concerned about the devastating impact of your new HST on homebuyers and an industry that's already weathering a very difficult economic storm. They're concerned that your massive tax hike will not only make home ownership less affordable, but eliminate some of the 11,480 direct and indirect jobs expected in the residential construction industry in Waterloo region this year and tens of thousands of jobs throughout the province.

I ask you, Premier, what assurance can you give the industry that there will not be any job losses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That certainly wasn't the case in other provinces that harmonized. Ontario will be the fifth province to harmonize. I would remind the member opposite that there are a variety of measures designed not only to build on the strength of our economy but to in fact stimulate growth.

I don't agree with the member. We don't believe that status quo is the right way to move forward. This government is committed and has undertaken a broad tax reform that will cut taxes for small business, cut taxes for big business, cut taxes for individuals and indeed, with the most generous sales tax credit for new home purchases, will have a very minimal effect on a small percentage of overall new home sales in Ontario. It's the right policy to move forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Back to the Premier: It really doesn't matter whether you agree with me or not; I am voicing the concerns of the Ontario Home Builders' Association and the local associations throughout the province of Ontario.

I want to quote the president of the London Home Builders' Association, who has expressed concern about the possible impact of your huge sales tax on homebuyers. Tom Kerkhoff said on April 1, 2009: "Obviously the provincial government isn't too concerned about the underground economy and the risk that homeowners incur dealing with these unscrupulous contractors."

Do you not understand that by raising sales taxes, you are hurting hard-working, honest people and ignoring those who don't play by the rules?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we're doing is creating the conditions for economic growth to resume in this province so people can in fact buy new homes.

I don't agree with the member opposite, either in her premise or in her conclusion. First of all, only 7% of new home purchases will be impacted by this; that's number one. Number two, the tax cuts we're providing for individuals and for corporations will help this economy

grow. I disagree with the member that we should just do nothing at this point in time. It's incumbent on governments at all levels to take dramatic steps and dynamic steps.

I'll quote to her somebody I know her party has quoted many times. Mr. Jack Mintz, the Palmer Chair in public policy, said: "Nonetheless, sales tax harmonization will reap large benefits to the Ontario economy. The McGuinty government will go down in history for its leadership in"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Many municipalities and environmental groups are opposed to the McGuinty government's scheme to spread sewage sludge on farm fields without a waste disposal permit. A few months ago, the minister said that the McGuinty government had "participated, conducted and funded" studies about the spreading of sewage sludge on farm fields, but not one of the studies listed by the McGuinty government considered the human health impacts from spreading sewage sludge on farm fields.

My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government going to allow the spreading of sewage sludge on farm fields without a waste disposal permit when you have failed to examine the human health impacts of that sewage sludge?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, I can tell you that within the Ministry of the Environment, we are concerned about people's health and safety. That has always been our primary concern. We are studying this situation, and we will get back to the member in due course.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: In fact, you're far beyond studying. What you're proposing to do is to allow these companies to spread sewage sludge on farm fields without any kind of permit whatsoever. You've ignored the studies—for example, one done at the University of Toledo, which shows there is increased risk of abdominal bloating, jaundice, weight loss, respiratory, gastrointestinal and chronic diseases among people living within one mile of farm fields that have had sewage sludge spread on them.

You're going to open up the system. You're going to make it difficult for people to find out when sewage sludge is being spread, what kind of sewage sludge is being spread and how much of it is being spread, because they won't require a permit anymore. Will you commit to doing the human health impact studies before you create this free-for-all?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, this has been done in the province of Ontario in one way or another for over the past 30 years. We always rely on

the best science. We will continue to do that. We will make sure that the health and safety of the people of Ontario is protected at all times. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol
Bentley, Christopher	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Best, Margaret	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Brown, Michael A.	Horwath, Andrea	Phillips, Gerry
Brownell, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Kormos, Peter	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sousa, Charles
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Marchese, Rosario	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
DiNovo, Cheri	McGuinty, Dalton	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Shurman, Peter
Bailey, Robert	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Chudleigh, Ted	O'Toole, John	Yakubski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Runciman, Robert W.	
Hardeman, Ernie	Savoline, Joyce	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 54; the nays are 13.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I would like to welcome in the west members' gallery today Janet Dalziel, president of the Canadian Celiac Association; Jim McCarthy, executive director of the Canadian Celiac Association; and Serge Buy from the great riding of Ottawa Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like members to welcome Rebecca Evans, who's a project manager with Midhaven Homes and the first vice-president of the Durham Region Home Builders' Association. She's in the members' gallery. Welcome, Rebecca. Enjoy the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have seven people coming to the Legislature this afternoon. They haven't arrived yet, but I'll introduce them in anticipation of their arrival: Pamela Taylor, Carmine Iacono, Louise Gomez, Tony Rahim, Aubrey Leblanc, Gita Chopra and Alan Krolrk.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also would like to introduce members of the Lawrence family. There would be Moira Lawrence and her daughter, Alison; her husband, Brian Young, and their son, Sean; his wife, Esther Shipman and their son, Declan. The family is here today to draw memory to her deceased husband, Allan Lawrence.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: This week is Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario. It is a time for us to think of the children and their families who are going through so much and to remember a government that is doing so little.

Last week, I asked the Minister of Children and Youth Services to provide the funding needed to get children off waiting lists and give them the care they need, yet when I pointed out that the government's own Roots of Youth Violence report suggested \$200-million increase, the minister attacked us for advocating overspending. Imagine, they attacked their own report.

What is their response to the need for more money? The minister is conducting a "mapping of the current services available." "Mapping services" is the response? What this government does not need to do is waste time

writing out plans, but to actually give children's mental health the funding it needs.

Minister, there are thousands of children around the province waiting for treatment. There are excellent and renowned agencies around the province waiting for funding. When are you going to do your part?

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Jim Brownell: Since 2003, my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has seen unprecedented investment and support from the Ontario government. Like all communities, my riding has endured difficult times, but this area has continually shown its character and resiliency, and these investments are certainly paying off.

To illustrate this point, I'm very pleased to announce that 2009 will be a record year for construction value for the city of Cornwall. The chief building official, Barry Coleman, has recently told the city's planning advisory committee there will be at least \$175 million in construction value this year, which is the highest recorded value since statistics began being kept in 1958.

This great record is partially due, in no small part, to the commitment by this government for the redevelopment of the Cornwall Community Hospital. This investment not only demonstrates the McGuinty government's dedication to the health care renaissance in this community and across the province, but also shows the benefits to our citizens in all sectors of the workforce when we invest in the infrastructure of our community.

Hospitals and roads are being built, which gives our construction workers jobs. They, in turn, buy food and clothing for their families and thus provide more jobs and more benefits to our families.

The results are more far reaching than just structures that are created and repaired. The results are in the improvements in the lives of our citizens and their families. I'm very proud to see the continued developments in my riding, and across the province as a whole, by this government.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I know that members know there is an opposition day motion today, and I'd like to put some remarks on the record right now.

I am here today to warn the House that this government's new tax undermines the dream of home ownership for families in Ontario. The Durham Region Association of Realtors advises me that the new PST means higher costs for legal fees, appraisal fees, real estate commissions, moving expenses, home-staging services, landscaping, mortgages, insurance and the list goes on—title insurance etc.

Executive Officer Cail Maclean and PAC Chair Lloyd Elliott note in a recent letter that the harmonization will

have a dramatic negative effect on the resale housing market.

Today, the Building Industry and Land Development Association estimates that the cost of the PST to new homebuyers in the greater Toronto area would be \$800 million.

The extended PST threatens up to 21,000 jobs in the construction industry. The new tax will not just make everyday items more expensive; it's more than that. It puts at risk the dream of home ownership for Ontarians, as well as thousands of jobs in the building, renovation and real estate sectors.

The citizens of Ontario have had enough of this government's tax-and-spend policies. I can assure you that the people of Ontario will not easily forget a government that has twice promised not to raise taxes, and yet has done exactly that three times. They have raised taxes irrespective of the state of the economy. In fact, they have exacerbated the state of the economy, and I think it's time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAMIL CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Michael Prue: Outside, Tamil Canadians are protesting the civil and genocidal war in Sri Lanka. In the past, they have organized many protests in this city. Tens of thousands of Tamils formed a human chain around the downtown core several months ago. Thousands sat in on University Avenue across from the United States consulate. Yesterday and today, they are protesting in front of Queen's Park. Tomorrow, they're forming a human chain around the downtown core again. They are bringing a message, one of passion and one of the safety of family, friends and loved ones who are dying daily in Sri Lanka.

I think that what they are asking is absolutely reasonable: (1) They are asking the Canadian people, the people of Ontario and the people of Toronto to speak with one voice to halt the war and find a political solution in their former homeland. (2) They want to stop the bombing of civilians and hospitals; we read with horror about people being bombed in a hospital and dying yesterday. (3) They want to provide assistance to the dispossessed in that country, of which there are hundreds of thousands. (4) They want the embargo lifted on food and medicine for humanitarian aid for people who desperately need it. (5) They want to open up the area to international observers and the press so that the entire world can see what is happening.

I think that what they are asking for is more than reasonable, and members of this Legislature should go out and say hello and give them some support.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: It gives me great pleasure to be part of a government that has made great strides in improving driver safety across Ontario.

The McGuinty Liberals have made significant progress in improving road safety by repairing aging infrastructure, enacting tougher street-racing laws and establishing aerial enforcement of the 400-series highways.

The McGuinty government also recognizes that safe driving requires one's full attention. Unfortunately, a leading cause of collisions is distracted drivers. I am pleased that our government has taken steps to reduce the consequences of these actions by introducing legislation that will prohibit the use of electronic devices, allowing drivers to keep their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road.

Our government is also looking to toughen drinking-and-driving laws by increasing the penalties for drivers who blow into the "warn" range to three days for a first occurrence, seven days for a second occurrence and 30 days for a third occurrence.

The award presented to the government of Ontario by the Ontario Safety League was not given by chance. This award is a symbol of the collective road safety initiatives we have taken. We will continue to work hard to maintain Ontario's standing as having the safest roads in North America.

1310

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last month this Legislature heard about Mark the painter. Mark Douglas received written assurances from the Minister of Finance—and I quote from the minister's letter—that he "would not agree to harmonizing with the GST if that would increase the tax burden on Ontario taxpayers." It was a promise not worth the paper it was written on, as was established this morning in question period. The Dalton sales tax threatens to drive many small businesses into the underground economy and make it more difficult for legitimate businesses, like Mr. Douglas's, to compete.

Today, we learned that the DST will drive up the cost of not just the painting of homes but also the homes themselves. People are quite rightly outraged. They want to know why this government would levy the Dalton sales tax on services necessary to purchase a home like legal fees, appraisals, real estate commissions, home inspection fees and moving costs.

Half of my riding, Halton Hills, is in the GTA. The Dalton sales tax on homes will hit hardest in the GTA, where the houses cost the most. The DST will cost GTA purchasers a whopping \$575 million more. For example, I'm told that, last month, the average sale price of a home in Oakville was \$531,000. That average home is now subject to the DST, putting it even further out of reach for Ontario families.

Like Mark the painter, these families are wondering: When will this government stop breaking its promises to impose no new taxes? When will it start supporting their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations instead of standing in the way?

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Bill Mauro: It's with great pleasure that I rise to share with my colleagues some of what our McGuinty government is doing to ensure a strong future for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Recently, we announced \$10.4 million in capital funding through the Investing in Ontario Act, helping Thunder Bay reduce its infrastructure deficit and maintain their taxes at lower rates than might otherwise have been the case. It's only one of a series of announcements on infrastructure for Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario in the recent past. Very soon, Thunder Bay will be receiving \$5 million as part of the affordable housing program to build 251 home repair housing units. Thunder Bay will also be receiving almost \$30 million from the Ontario municipal partnership fund to ensure Thunder Bay can invest in the business, cultural and community infrastructure needed to ensure a prosperous future. This amount represents an increase of \$1.4 million over last year's total.

A very clear indicator of our commitment to our community is seen as we flow \$4 million per year, likely to happen for three years, for a total of \$12 million, to fund the net operating loss on the city's homes for the aged—there are at least two of them—as part of our commitment to replacing two of the three homes with a new long-term-care facility.

Thunder Bay has a storied history as the gateway to the far north, and today it remains northwestern Ontario's largest municipality. Our government is committed to responding to the challenges of our city through strategic investments that will improve the lives of all of its citizens.

CELIAC DISEASE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: May is Celiac Awareness Month in Canada. Celiac disease is a medical condition in which the absorptive surface of the small intestine is damaged by a substance called gluten. This results in an inability of the body to absorb protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins or minerals, all of which are necessary for good health.

It is estimated that celiac disease affects one out of 133 people in Canada. At present, there is no cure, but celiac disease is readily treated and controlled by following a gluten-free diet as long as it is quickly diagnosed. That is why early diagnosis is so important and why, throughout the month of May, the Canadian Celiac Association will be speaking to politicians, health care providers and the public about the need to ensure that screening tests for celiac disease are readily available to everyone.

The Canadian Celiac Association is a national organization dedicated to providing services and support to persons with celiac disease through awareness, advocacy, education and research. Founded in 1972, they have an

active membership of over 7,000 people, including 3,000 in Ontario.

I would like to recognize the good work being done by the celiac association through their president, Janet Dalziel; their executive director, Jim McCarthy; and our local representative in Ottawa, June Williams. I encourage all Ontarians to take the time to learn more about celiac disease this month.

I'm hoping members and their staff will join me at the Canadian Celiac Association reception this evening from 4:30 to 7 p.m. in committee room 2.

MICHELLE MENDES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I rise today to discuss a matter of deep sorrow that has affected not only the citizens of my riding but the entire country: the untimely death of Major Michelle Mendes.

Michelle was a young woman of unsurpassed dedication to her country. Her first tour of Afghanistan was tragically cut short when she was injured in 2006. After receiving medical treatment, Michelle returned to Afghanistan to continue her tour of duty. Michelle died in Afghanistan on April 23, 2009. Her passing has left a hole in the hearts of many, particularly in Michelle's hometown of Wicklow. Michelle returned home with full military honours and began the procession down the Highway of Heroes on Sunday, April 26. The small, two-lane bridge in her hometown was jammed with people, including members of the Alnwick/Haldimand fire department, who stood atop their vehicles, as well as Branch 580 of the Legion Honour Guard, who stood on the on-ramp of the highway.

At times like these, it's hard to adequately express the grief we experience as a community, and the sorrow we feel for Michelle, her family and her loved ones. I'd like to convey the gratitude we feel for Michelle's selfless dedication to her country.

I'm proud to say that Major Michelle Mendes was a true hero. She was a young woman who many of us were proud to call a wife, a daughter, a granddaughter and a friend. Michelle was a gifted student, a school athlete, a person who strove every day of her young life not for mediocrity but for excellence—a true inspiration, particularly for the young women of Ontario.

We can never know the depth of sorrow of Michelle's family and friends. Our hearts go out to her husband, Victor; Michelle's parents, Ron and Dianne Knight; and the rest of the family.

I would ask for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to remember and honour our hero, Major Michelle Mendes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in recognition of Major Michelle Mendes.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS
FOR ALL ACT, 2009LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS
À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE
SUR L'ESSENCE

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities / *Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard des remboursements de la taxe sur l'essence similaires consentis aux municipalités par le ministre.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is not my first attempt to remedy this inequity. It was interesting that today the Premier was talking about inequality with respect to the Employment Insurance Act. If this act is passed, it will remedy the inequity in the gasoline tax rebate and the way that the ministry provides it to rural municipalities.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESSEXUAL ASSAULT
PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For over 20 years, the month of May has been officially recognized as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. It's a time to acknowledge the survivors of sexual violence. One survivor tells us, "We can't speak publicly because then we are too visible and fear not being believed or doubted."

The Ontario Coalition Of Rape Crisis Centres tells us that sexual assault prevention month is a time to publicly remind citizens that sexual assault happens every day in our communities—and globally—and often in places unseen and unheard. It's a time to mourn the missing and murdered aboriginal women and recommit to taking action to end violence against aboriginal women. It's a time to raise awareness that the actual and perceived vulnerability of women with disabilities places them at greater risk of sexual assault. It's a time to inform ourselves that homeless and transient women are also at greater risk, as well as immigrant women and women from racialized communities.

1320

It's a time for francophone women to come together and be vocal about the challenges they face in order to make public the misconceptions about their lives. To Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, working together reinforces the idea of solidarity.

During this month, there are a variety of activities and events taking place in communities across this province. Whether it's community breakfasts, open houses, workshops or touring schools to discuss healthy relationships, the people in our communities are doing the hard work to find innovative community solutions to ending the complex issue of sexual violence. I invite you to visit the Ontario Women's Directorate website at Ontario.ca/women for a list of events taking place in your communities. I'd like to acknowledge the incredible people in our communities who have been working hard day in and day out for over 30 years.

Less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to police. Myths around sexual assault can make women and girls feel they will be victims over and over again if they speak out. For example, it's simply wrong to suggest that a woman is responsible for violence against herself because of the clothes she was wearing. Sexual Assault Prevention Month is an important opportunity to dispel this and other myths. It's also an opportunity to redouble our efforts to raise awareness and encourage dialogue on this complex issue.

Our government is committed to developing a sexual violence action plan, and I'd like to thank our partners and survivors of sexual violence whose voices are reflected in what I've had to say today. In particular, the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and the Disabled Women's Network Ontario, known as DAWN. Thanks to the sexual assault centres and the sexual assault/domestic violence treatment centres. I'd also like to thank the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and the Ontario Native Women's Association for their ongoing dedication to ending violence against aboriginal women.

Finally, I would urge all members of this House to get involved in this work and to support your community organizations however you can. I'm convinced that if we work together, we can end sexual violence in Ontario.

RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

L'hon. John Wilkinson: Je prends aujourd'hui la parole à la Chambre pour vous entretenir de la situation de la recherche scientifique en Ontario.

I rise in the House today to speak about the state of scientific research in Ontario.

Around the world, we are known by our global research leaders, especially in genomics and the life sciences. We are, in fact, the fourth-largest biomedical

cluster in North America and by far the largest in Canada.

Some of Ontario's exceptional global research leaders have taken time out of their busy schedules to join us today at Queen's Park. I'd like the House to particularly recognize two gentlemen who are with us this afternoon. We have Dr. Lou Siminovitch, who is the great researcher from the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute at Mount Sinai Hospital, and also Dr. Christian Burks, the CEO of the Ontario Genomics Institute. Welcome to Queen's Park.

These scientists and others are doing exceptional transformational work in their fields. Their achievements make all of us in Ontario very proud. They are committed to Ontario, and Ontario is equally committed to standing up for them. More than that, Ontario is going to bat for them. We are saying that we understand the value of science to our economy and our future and we value the work that our scientists are doing and the wealth and the jobs they are creating. We are sending a clear signal that we will not stand by and idly watch as competing jurisdictions attempt to play catch-up with Ontario.

Les membres du gouvernement McGuinty ne baisseront pas les bras quand d'autres juridictions tentent d'attirer hors de l'Ontario des membres de notre milieu de recherche de calibre mondial. Nous disons au monde : « Nous sommes disposés à collaborer avec vous, mais nous ne tolérons pas le braconnage. » Nous livrerons bataille.

Le gouvernement McGuinty tiendra ses engagements, fier du travail de ces scientifiques et finançant l'excellence en recherche en Ontario. Aujourd'hui, nous prenons position.

Unlike other governments, the McGuinty government will not stand down while other jurisdictions attempt to lure members of our world-class research community out of Ontario. We are saying to Washington and to the world, "We're willing to collaborate with you, but no poaching allowed"—not without a fight, and not for a lack of commitment on the part of the McGuinty government, and not for a lack of pride in their work or a lack of funding for research excellence in Ontario.

Today we are taking a stand. When it comes to making funding for research and innovation a priority, we've had our flag in the ground for several years, and today we announced new funding that will keep it firmly planted here.

Where other jurisdictions around the world, including the United States, have recently come around to the idea of the knowledge economy and the importance of investing in basic and applied research, Premier McGuinty created a ministry dedicated to research and innovation four years ago. He gave Ontario a head start and today, thanks to the Premier's vision and leadership, Ontario is not only in the game, we are in the lead. Last year, our government launched Ontario's innovation agenda, our \$3.2-billion plan to support innovation in Ontario in areas like the life sciences, where our province already is a global leader. And just a few weeks ago, the McGuinty

government reaffirmed its commitment to research and innovation in the 2009 provincial budget. The budget provided \$715 million in new investments and more than \$110 million in additional tax relief to support Ontario innovation, because we know that new knowledge leads to new products, new companies and new jobs.

The new economy is fuelled by new ideas. That is why we are committing an additional \$400 million to support basic and applied research, which brings me back to today. Of this new funding for research, it's my great pleasure to announce that the McGuinty government is investing \$100 million in genomics and gene-related research. We are creating a new world-class fund, the global leadership round in genomics and life sciences, to support the groundbreaking work of leading scientists and their teams in fields such as genomics, proteomics and stem cell research.

J'ai le grand plaisir d'annoncer qu'en vertu de ce nouveau financement de la recherche, le gouvernement McGuinty investit 100 \$ millions en recherche en génomique et en recherche relative aux gènes.

Nous créons un nouveau fonds de calibre mondial, le volet Leadership mondial en génomique et en sciences de la vie, pour appuyer le travail révolutionnaire de grands scientifiques et de leur équipe dans des domaines comme la génomique, la protéomique et la recherche sur les cellules souches.

Genomics is a tremendously complicated field, about as complicated as science gets. A genome is the complete catalogue of the DNA blueprint that makes all life on this planet unique. It's typically expressed as a number of base pairs. The human genome contains three billion base pairs. I found a good analogy that puts this in perspective: If you compare the human genome that's stored on DNA to a set of instructions stored in a book, it would be over a billion words long; you'd need 5,000 volumes, each 300 pages long, to store the material; and you'd find a copy of that book, all 5,000 volumes, in almost every cell in your body.

If genes and DNA are like an instruction book, mastering the content is vitally important. Genomics holds out new hope for finding cures for diseases like cancer, diabetes and heart disease. It also holds the promise of green solutions for agriculture, the environment and biodiversity protection.

All of these—better health care, a cleaner environment, and a better quality of life—are part of our vision of Ontario's future. That's why we're committed to training, attracting and retaining the world's best researchers to pioneer the cures, discoveries and technologies of tomorrow. As an example, we are all extremely proud to hear that on April 29, Dr. Janet Rossant, chief of research at Sick Kids, was one of only 18 foreign associates to be elected to the prestigious United States National Academy of Sciences.

Avec le nouveau volet Leadership mondial en génomique et en sciences de la vie, de 100 \$ millions, l'Ontario continuera de cultiver une économie d'innovation qui appuie le travail révolutionnaire de grandes et grands scientifiques et de leur équipe.

Ainsi, comme l'annonce la présente communication, on continuera de découvrir, de mettre au point et de concrétiser de grandes idées et ce, ici même en Ontario. Il en résultera de bons emplois et un avenir radieux pour nos familles et nos collectivités.

Finally, with the new \$100-million Global Leadership Round in Genomics and Life Sciences, Ontario will continue to grow an innovation economy that supports the groundbreaking work of leading scientists and their teams. Today's announcement means great ideas will continue to be discovered, developed and brought to life right here in Ontario. That means great jobs and a brighter future for our families and our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As the Progressive Conservative critic for women's issues, I'm pleased to be able to join the minister to recognize May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

We all agree that sexual assault is horrific and traumatizing and causes a great deal of physical and emotional harm within our communities. That is why it's so important that we not only recognize but also provide support for those affected by sexual assault. We each have a role to play in modeling respectful behaviour towards others. Sexual assault is a violent crime. It extends beyond sexual harassment and is the actual unwanted threat of sexual contact without consent. Its effects can crush one's self esteem, worthiness and dignity. It is absolutely an infringement on one's rights.

Although this year marks the 21st year that Ontario has recognized May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario, the stats on sexual assault are shocking. Studies show that 50% of all Canadian women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime and most of them are under the age of 25. Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 21 are at the highest risk of being sexually assaulted. A staggering 38% of women and girls are sexually assaulted by their husbands or boyfriends. The majority of victims know the accused. Also, what is probably the most troubling statistic: Only 6% of all cases get reported.

Sexual assault is one of the least-reported crimes against both men and women because of feelings of shame or fear of re-victimization through the criminal trial process. Sexual assault is a crime that does not discriminate based on race, culture, creed, sex or age. Statistics Canada stated that in 2005, 61% of sexual assaults reported were committed against youth under the age of 17 and that 83% of disabled women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. Certainly these numbers depict a frightening story, and I think we can all agree that we have to do better.

This month gives us the opportunity to come together as citizens and legislators to help raise awareness for a topic that is reported to afflict one in four women and one

in five men. It's about making sure that the citizens of Ontario, those who are victimized by unwanted sexual acts, know unconditionally that we, as elected officials, will stand by them.

In my riding of Dufferin-Caledon, Family Transition Place, together with the Headwaters Health Care Centre's sexual assault treatment program and the Dufferin Child and Family Services mental health program, are working on the Sunrise Program. The Sunrise Program ensures adult and children survivors of assault have access to the medical, emotional and psychological support they need. A public education initiative is in the works to help survivors, who are often reluctant to seek help, feel more confident in opening the door to support.

We need to be instilling awareness in this subject at a very early age. More than 5,800 youth in grades 5 to 12 from the Upper Grand District School Board, Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, through Family Transition Place, have been learning about some of the underlying attitudes, behaviours and skills that can help them have healthier, more respectful relationships with their friends and family, and ultimately stop the assaults before they begin.

Family Transition Place counsellors have provided support and direction to many of our students and their families over the years. They leave schools more aware and informed with regard to the issue of healthy versus unhealthy relationships. I'd like to thank the many groups that work tirelessly to spread awareness and remove the stigma associated with sexual assault across Ontario in all our communities.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'd like to express our thanks to those who are working every day to help people overcome their experiences with the violent crime of sexual assault. I urge all members of this Legislature to work towards raising awareness not just during the month of May, but every month, so that all victims will feel confident in reporting these crimes and will know that their community stands behind them.

RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

M. Gilles Bisson: Je veux prendre l'occasion, premièrement, de féliciter le ministre pour avoir essayé, autant que possible, de faire son discours en français. C'est toujours apprécié quand on voit nos amis les allophones se lancer dans la langue de Molière, comme on dit, pour s'exprimer dans cette Assemblée. Je peux vous dire, comme francophone, que c'est apprécié.

Le gouvernement aujourd'hui a annoncé quelque chose qui, dans son intention, n'est pas une méchante affaire. Je ne vais pas me lever dans la Chambre pour dire que ces investissements sont négatifs. Mais clairement, le problème, c'est que c'est seulement une partie de ce qu'on a besoin de faire, qui est toujours un dossier beaucoup plus grand que ces 100 \$ millions dont on a parlé aujourd'hui.

On a parlé aujourd'hui pendant la conférence de presse de l'importance de s'assurer qu'on ne voit pas nos

scientifiques partir de l'Ontario pour aller aux autres pays comme les États-Unis. Oui, c'est important. On a besoin de s'assurer que ce n'est pas le cas. Mais je vous pose cette question : avec tout ce qui se passe dans notre système scolaire postsecondaire, est-ce qu'on va vraiment arrêter l'exode de ces scientifiques vers d'autres pays comme les États-Unis, ou même aux autres provinces ? La réponse est non. Ça va aider une partie, il n'y a aucune question, mais il y a encore un plus gros problème dans le système. On connaît beaucoup de jeunes qui décident de faire l'exode parce que les opportunités sont plus grandes ailleurs. On a beaucoup plus à faire ici en Ontario pour arrêter cet exode des scientifiques de cette province.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to rise and speak on behalf of those victims of sexual assault. I have to say the member from Dufferin—Caledon said it best: One in two women in Ontario and Canada is the victim of sexual assault at least once during the course of their lifetime. This is an absolutely staggering statistic. This is something that we should all be horrified by. I often think that if one out of every two hockey players was the victim of sexual assault, we'd have a cabinet committee struck to do nothing but look into the issue. But the reality is it's not hockey players, it's not men; it's women, particularly vulnerable women—children, teenagers, the elderly, in fact.

So the question is, what do we do about it in this month? It's not enough just to have a month set aside. What do we do about it? The answers are very, very clear. Certainly I in my professional capacity, before being elected and since being elected, have travelled the province talking to women's groups, and they ask with one voice that this government respond. Here is what they're asking for: They ask for dependable, long-term funding for social services that deal with victims of assault—they don't have that yet; they ask for transition housing so that women can escape from violent men and adequate transition housing—they don't have it yet. They ask, because we know that sexual assault is perpetrated on those who are economically vulnerable—they ask for a living minimum wage, for economic independence in a province where women make 71 cents for every dollar that men make.

I have put forward two motions on the order paper that I beg this government to look at: (1) Holly's law, put forward by the mother of Holly Jones, Maria Jones, who is calling for primary prevention in elementary schools across Ontario. We certainly need that. It would cost only \$1 million, which is not a great deal. You just heard a \$100-million announcement. Why not \$1 million to prevent our children from being abused? Holly's law would do that through the Boost program; and (2) something very simple that wouldn't cost a dime: I've asked for an all-party-member women's committee to look at

issues that deal with violence against women. If we all got together, put aside our partisan differences and actually focused on the task at hand, maybe, just maybe in the month of May we'd make a difference instead of just having May after May come and go, and the statistics remain the same.

1340

I'm speaking on behalf of all victims and I'm saying it's not enough just to have a month; we've got to do something. We know what to do, the groups out there know what to do; they're asking this government to do it, so please, on behalf of the victims, actually do something.

ALLAN LAWRENCE

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in tribute to the Honourable Allan Lawrence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: On behalf of the PC caucus, it is my distinct privilege to pay tribute to the Honourable Allan Lawrence, PC, QC, B.A., LL.B, L.S.M. We're paying tribute to his 30 years in public office.

With us in the gallery today are his wife, Moira; as well as their daughter, Alison Lawrence, and her husband, Bryan Young; Allan and Moira's son, Sean; his wife, Esther Shipman; and their son, Declan. Allan and Moira's granddaughter, Emma Healey, has visited the Legislature previously with her grandfather. She is unable to join us today because Emma is in her final year at UTS before attending Concordia in Montreal this fall.

Sadly, Allan Lawrence passed away September 6, 2008, in his 83rd year. Allan Lawrence was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1958, over 40 years ago, representing the riding of St. George until 1972: 14 years at the provincial Legislature.

At that time, Allan was the youngest MPP ever elected in Ontario. During his early days in the Legislature, when he still practised law, he would go to his law office early in the morning and then return up to Queen's Park for question period. He would then return to the law office late in the afternoon, and then again would go back to the House for night sittings. We must recall there were no subways or streetcars back then.

Under Premier John Robarts, he was responsible for the Lawrence report, which became the template for the Ontario Business Corporations Act. It formed the basis for company law reform in Ontario.

Allan Lawrence was Minister of Mines from 1968 to 1970. He served as Minister of Mines and Northern Affairs in 1970-71, Minister of Justice and Attorney General in 1971-72, and Provincial Secretary for Justice from January 5, 1972, to September 28, 1972.

In 1971, Allan ran to succeed John Robarts as party leader, losing to Bill Davis by a mere 44 votes on the fourth ballot. Turning to federal politics in 1972, Allan was elected in Durham—Northumberland. He would serve

Durham–Northumberland federally for 16 years, retiring from office in 1988. During that time, Allan served as Solicitor General for Canada and Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in the Joe Clark government.

Allan Lawrence is fondly remembered for his lifetime achievements beyond the federal and provincial parliaments. He was an ex officio lifetime bencher of the Law Society of Upper Canada. He received the law society's medal for outstanding service to the legal profession. In his community, he was always active, serving as a director of the Northumberland Art Gallery; chair of the millennium task force at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Cobourg; and a member of the major gifts committee for the Northumberland hospital fundraising campaign. Allan Lawrence was also a 30-year member of the board of governors for the Central Hospital in Toronto.

His family deeply cherish the memories of Allan Lawrence as a husband, father and grandfather. Whether it was in the legal profession, community service, Parliament, cabinet or among his family and friends, Allan Lawrence was a leader and an inspiration to all. In 2005, he was recognized and received the Churchill Society Award for his contribution to parliamentary democracy in Canada, with 30 years of public service. He also served his country as a member of the Royal Canadian Navy in World War II.

I'm grateful for the time and advice that Allan Lawrence shared with me as a mentor and a friend. I'm honoured to offer these words of tribute and I'm confident my sentiments are shared by all members of the Legislature. The Honourable Allan Lawrence was a gentleman, an admired elected statesman, a dedicated family man and a great Canadian citizen. I was fortunate to have known him.

I want to thank Moira, Alison, Sean and members of the family who are with us today.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed my honour to stand and pay tribute to Allan Lawrence.

As a student at the University of Toronto, I would sometimes sneak out of my class where we were learning about politics and come over here to the Legislature to actually watch it being practised. I would sit up there and watch the politicians as they rose to answer the thorny questions of the day, to make the great speeches, and often thought that I might one day like to come here as well.

I remember watching Allan Lawrence. I remember watching him here in the Legislature on so many occasions back in those days.

But what I remember most is, in my final year at the University of Toronto in 1971, being part of a group of students who went down to watch the Conservative leadership convention. I still have my little badge to prove that I have attended a Conservative leadership convention. It's among my paraphernalia at home. I went down there to do a study. We did a study on Legislatures and elections and how delegates figured out who they were going to support. Every day, after we took the delegates' information from them, I remember we had to put it on

punch cards, because that was the computerized system of the day, and then we had to take the punch cards and marry them off based on their geographical locations, their education—we had a number of criteria. I remember going down there as part of that U of T team and listening to the delegates. We set up a booth. We invited confidentiality. We had, as I said, collected raw data.

But what I remember most is that Allan came to our booth to say hello. He shook all of our hands. He was, of course, in the midst of a leadership race, but he found some time to talk to three or four students dedicated to the inexact science of political science, and we had quite a good and long conversation with him. I do remember that during those times he spoke to us about his goals and his policies and why he wanted to be leader and why he thought he would be a great leader. I remember watching his amazing speech at that convention. Most of all—and I think I can still sing the theme song, *Winning Is Just the Beginning*, because it played over and over for three days, especially as the ballot results were announced through four successive ballots. It was a very tight race, as has been said. He was a man of great class and conviction, and although he lost the race by some 44 votes, he immediately rallied around the winner, Bill Davis, and brought all of his team with him so that the Conservative Party had a united front. That is an amazing thing for a politician to do when he had come so close.

Following his political career in this House, as has been said, he went federal, where he distinguished himself over a great many years.

He had many accomplishments, but I think the one for which he is most internationally known was the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union, which sought around the world to talk about parliamentary democracies; the way that democracies and democratic peoples met together through their institutions. As has been said, he was awarded with the 2005 Churchill Society Award for furthering parliamentary democracy around the world.

Allan Lawrence was a man who loved this Legislature. He loved its parliamentary traditions. He was a man who loved the House of Commons and all of the traditions of that great House. He fought for his principles throughout his entire life, mindful that others might have differing principles, and he loved the cut and thrust of debate. He brought to this House a dignity and a respect from all sides and a commitment to his party and to the people of this province.

To his wife, Moira, and to his children, thank you for sharing a husband and a father and a man who helped to make Ontario a very good and wonderful place in which to live.

1350

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's an honour for me to be able to pay tribute to an individual who played such a significant role, not only in this House, but in the federal House of Commons as well.

If you had any interest in politics—and the member for Beaches–East York just made reference to this—as a student, and I think some of us had an early interest in

politics, one of the names that we had heard and one of the people that we would have observed was Allan Lawrence as being very prominent, not only within the Conservative Party here in Ontario but also within the government of Ontario.

Of course, it was a very exciting race that took place in 1971 for the leadership of the party. I think Bob Welch was involved in that one as well at that time. A lot of excitement was generated in the Niagara Peninsula, but it was well known that some of the people who were going to be contesting were very powerful individuals, and Allan Lawrence was considered to be a very significant contender—with justification.

When you lose by 44 votes—it's probably easier to lose by 444 votes than 44 votes. He didn't look upon it as a loss—there's obviously the disappointment—but he took the opportunity, again, as my friend from Beaches—East York said, to rally around the flag of the party at that time, and that's not always an easy thing to do. When there's a very toughly contested race, from time to time people fall away from a party or fall away from a government or decide that they're simply going to allow the new leader to perhaps flounder and point out to the party they made the wrong choice. That was certainly not what Allan Lawrence did, and by bringing his considerable team to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, he provided that service.

He also served federally in the House of Commons. One of the things you look at when you look at statistics, and statistics don't tell the whole story, but he won 10 elections—and it takes a lot to win 10 elections—both at the provincial level of government and the federal level of government. Consider, as well, a very urban downtown Toronto riding was where he was elected as a provincial member of the Legislature, and as a federal member in Northumberland—Durham, which would be much more rural and small-town than larger communities. But he was able to be elected there and consistently elected.

One of the things that he never forgot, as my colleagues have mentioned, is the constituents themselves, and that's exceedingly important. One can get a position, if you will—and he had positions in cabinet that have been mentioned, both federally and provincially—and having attained that position, forget about the constituency work. He never did so, and that speaks well of him.

He also was very close to family, and family are here today. When we're going through some of the history that we look at, it's interesting to note how different people have handled these circumstances. It says, "He was always home on Saturday and Sunday evenings and he never went on vacation without his children. 'It was probably to his detriment in terms of advancing his career, but he just felt his family was the most important thing,'" and that was his daughter Alison saying that. And that is important in his particular case. There are people who make those sacrifices.

Again, as is the case for so many of the members of the Legislature, he is a person who didn't need to be in

politics. He was going to be successful almost wherever he would be, certainly, in a legal career—and exclusively in a legal career he would have been very successful—but he chose to allow his name to be placed on a ballot and to serve the people, both provincially and federally, in the province of Ontario in two different constituencies.

One of the things I noted is that they always accuse, "they" meaning—John Diefenbaker used to refer to this vague "they" out there when he talked about people. From time to time, people accuse politicians of being liars. In this case, it actually fit for one reason and one purpose, and that was a very noble purpose. He lied about his age to get into the armed forces, and many people in those days did. While we may criticize people in life for not always being truthful, there's one case where, invariably, those of us in our society are thankful to people who actually didn't tell the truth about their age so they were able to serve in our armed forces. That showed a dedication to country. That showed a dedication to serving others not only within our country but in other places in the world as well. So we thank him very much for fudging the truth in that particular case and being a wonderful Canadian.

Again, the relationship to family and the relationship to their jobs out there and what might they do once they're out of politics: Allan Lawrence decided he would continue to serve, it has been mentioned, within his own community—the local hospital, the art gallery. It's easy to fade away and simply not have much to do with community, but people in public service are often inclined to do so.

Something else: It's easy to win an election when the tide is coming in, and you're coming in with the tide. He was in federal politics at a time—you think of 1974, when there was somewhat of a Liberal sweep at that particular time. He was still elected despite that. It wasn't just the matter of a tide taking him in or a tide taking him out. He was a pillar who stood there regardless of the circumstances.

I will not be repetitive of some of the things that my colleagues have said, except to say again that on the international front he was prepared to serve as well, and his love for parliamentary democracy and its importance to all of us in this jurisdiction and other jurisdictions was appropriately recognized, as well as receiving outstanding awards in terms of being a member of the legal profession.

Also, I note that when a federal opposition MP during the government of Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau, he served as the Chair of the public accounts committee, and that is a very prestigious and difficult position because you are holding a government to account. So the highest award from the Law Society of Upper Canada, the law society medal for outstanding service, and again, my friend mentioned the Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy award.

All Lawrence didn't look for awards, he didn't look for recognition. He looked for an opportunity to serve the people of Ontario. We thank his family for sharing his

life with us, through his political life and political service with us. There is a sacrifice despite the fact he was very considerate of family while in public life; there is always that sacrifice that the family has. We thank them very much. Again, the province of Ontario is a better place because Allan Lawrence served us both in this province and in the national Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and guests to join me as we observe a moment of silence in memory of former member Allan Lawrence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I'd just like to thank you, Mrs. Lawrence and members of the Lawrence family, for being here today. We'll ensure that copies of Hansard are sent to you as a memory of the tributes that have been paid to your late husband today. Thanks for joining us.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: More petitions on the HST.

"Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Alexis.

1400

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I'd like to thank many of the nurses at the Credit Valley Hospital for having organized this particular petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Cooper to carry it for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts; and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I agree with this petition, and I'm pleased to sign my name to it and pass it to page Robyn

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's March 26, 2009, budget introduced a harmonized sales tax to be implemented on July 1, 2010; and

"Whereas the harmonization will have a deleterious effect on all Ontarians, merging the GST and the PST to a regressive 13%; and

"Whereas new home buyers will be forced to spend 6% more on any property above \$500,000; and

"Whereas additional taxes will be levied on properties between \$400,000 and \$500,000 on a sliding scale; and

"Whereas rentals of commercial property will now be taxable for the first time; and

"Whereas legal fees, appraisals, commissions, home inspections, moving costs and other services associated with purchases of property are now subject to HST;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that the McGuinty government not implement the harmonized sales tax, particularly where it relates to the sale of property and especially at this time of economic slowdown and recession."

I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of members from the West Lincoln Historical Society, in Smithville, Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and shall sign it and send it to the clerk's table.

MULTIPLE MYELOMA

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, an incurable form of cancer; and

"Whereas Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Ontario for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells; and

"Whereas multiple myeloma is treatable with the proper therapies, thereby giving hope to the 2,000 Canadians diagnosed annually;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition and send it with Timothy.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition here that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and ...

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

"Whereas annual average 24-hour nitrogen dioxide concentrations were found to be among the highest when compared to provincial air quality index stations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas; and ...

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I will sign it and provide it to Cameron.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take the necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East LHIN address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of the constituents in the riding of Durham.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here assembled by Lurvie Deblois from the Fiesta Filipina Dance Troupe in Mississauga. It's in support of our nannies and caregivers.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a number of" nanny "and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign workers" and caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; "and

"Whereas a great number of ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support Lurvie Deblois and all the caregivers and nannies who need this protection, and I affix my name to the petition.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

"Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

"Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Eric.

1410

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

"Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

"Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon; and

"Whereas the following have endorsed SCAN legislation: city of Ottawa, city of Kingston, city of Hamilton, federation of Ontario municipalities, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Police Services Board, Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi, Ottawa Neighbourhood Watch executive committee, Concerned Citizens for Safer Neighbourhoods, Eastern Ontario Landlord Organization, Friends and Tenants of Ottawa Community Housing, Hintonburg Community Association, Somerset Street Chinatown BIA, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa and the Dalhousie Community Association;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature and send it to the table with page Cameron T.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: "Whereas St. Mary's hospital, Grand River hospital and Cambridge Memorial Hospital in the Waterloo region are experiencing a substantial increase in demand due to population growth;

"Whereas hospitals in the Waterloo region receive \$279 less per resident compared to other Ontarians;

"Whereas the McGuinty government's policies have contributed to nursing cuts and to other staff cuts, bed closures and the closure of outpatient clinics, all of which reduce the quality of care; and

"Whereas the provincial government has secured significant additional health care funding from the federal government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government provide our hospitals with their fair share of provincial funding and introduce a funding formula based on demographics and the health needs of the population."

I'm pleased to affix my signature.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from Glengarry county, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform

Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh"—my seatmate—"MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of my seatmate.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: On behalf of my colleagues in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I move the following opposition day motion:

Whereas on March 26, 2009, Dalton McGuinty once again broke his solemn promise to Ontarians and announced a massive McGuinty sales tax; and

Whereas the McGuinty sales tax increase will force homebuyers and sellers to pay more tax on services associated with real estate transactions, including but not limited to: legal fees, moving expenses, real estate commissions, development charges, home inspection fees and other closing costs; and

Whereas the McGuinty sales tax will cause home renovators and builders a massive McGuinty-driven cost increase through increased McGuinty sales tax charges; and

Whereas the McGuinty sales tax will cause vulnerable citizens, including seniors and renters, significant cost increases due to McGuinty sales tax charges; and

Whereas under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario homeowners have already been faced with a barrage of increased costs including skyrocketing property assessments and land transfer taxes; and

Whereas an economic recession is the worst time for Dalton McGuinty to increase taxes and erect further barriers to home ownership; and

Whereas the housing renovation, construction, sale and resale industries are a pillar of the economy in Ontario:

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon Premier McGuinty to acknowledge that, due to the current economic downturn, this is the wrong time to move forward with his ill-advised plan to yet again increase taxes on all people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 4. Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Young couples struggling to make better lives for their families work hard in this province to realize a dream: owning their own home. They are willing to sacrifice in other areas and lock in to huge mortgages to make this universal dream a reality.

With homeownership comes pride of ownership. When you own your very own home, you want to make it yours—decorate it your way and landscape the property around it your way—and in many cases you instantly become part of a community of other homeowners who want to do the same.

A house is merely a structure. The environment you create in it for your family makes it a home. Many in this Legislature have probably heard common expressions that address the value of homes; for example, "Home is where the heart is," or Dorothy, in the Wizard of Oz, who says, "There's no place like home."

March 26 of this year marked a sad time for couples, both young and old, hoping to buy a house or condo, to

realize the dream to make it a home for their family to grow and prosper together or to enjoy retirement after raising a family. That's the day the roof came crashing in on many people's dreams of home ownership. That's the day that Premier McGuinty's Liberals announced their biggest tax grab yet, in the form of a blended tax that means more taxes for everyone on everything from A to Z, from accounting services to the zinc in your vitamins.

Premier McGuinty decided to merge the PST and GST, but it's the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario who will pay the price of his mistimed and misguided decision, including those who buy a home. For starters on the Premier's tax hit list is a tax on homes over \$400,000. If you are watching this debate, you might be thinking—and certainly the Premier has encouraged this type of thinking—"I can't afford a home in this price range, so I'll just shut my TV off now; it doesn't apply to me." To those people I say, please keep listening and watching. I will let you know right now how you too will be affected.

Anyone looking to buy a house listed at any price will not be able to escape Premier McGuinty's new sales tax. If you are not taxed on the sale, the Premier will tax you somewhere else along the way to buying your new home. People will be forced to pay more tax on services associated with real estate transactions, such as legal fees, moving expenses, real estate commissions, development charges and home inspection fees. People who decide to renovate an existing property will be taxed on home renovations and landscaping, and people who want to be good stewards of the environment by purchasing Energy Star appliances will be taxed on those too.

1420

That's on top of all the other goods and services that will be taxed by Premier McGuinty. I'll just give you a little bit of an example here: prepared foods under \$4, like coffee and doughnuts; gas at the pumps, increased 7 cents a litre and 32 cents a gallon; electricity; home heating oil; newspapers; magazines; haircuts and styling; manicures; postal stamps; Internet access fees; cellphone bills; theatre admissions; ski lift tickets; tobacco; adult footwear under \$30; financial advisory services; legal services; gym fees; arena ice rentals; sports field rentals; audiobooks for the blind; funeral services; snowplowing; grasscutting; electrical services; plumbing services; carpentry services; air conditioning repairs; furnace repairs; rentals of commercial property; conferences and seminars; dry cleaning; car washes; bicycle safety gear; bicycles; veterinary care; domestic air travel; train fares; taxi fares; bus fares; golf green fees; courier fees; moving vans.

Mr. John O'Toole: Where does it end?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yes, where does it end? That certainly isn't the end. This rather lengthy list seems to grow every day, and it gives a whole new meaning to the expression "The only guarantees in life are death and taxes." As a friend of mine noted with respect to taxing funerals, Mr. McGuinty now has his hands in the pockets of the last suit you'll ever wear.

Today, we're focusing on the new tax implications of home ownership. They are significant. This morning, the

Building Industry and Land Development Association released a report called Big Hit on GTA Middle-Class Homebuyers with the Ontario Budget's HST Proposals. The report was written for BILD by veteran housing analyst Frank Clayton, PhD, and it reveals several key points. Premier McGuinty's tax on new housing will grab \$800 million a year in additional taxes. GTA new homebuyers will absorb \$575 million, or nearly three quarters, of the \$800-million tax increase, while accounting for less than half of new home sales in Ontario. Middle class families will be hit the hardest by the \$800-million tax increase.

Homes over \$400,000 are not just purchased by so-called wealthy Ontarians. Thirty per cent of home buyers who purchase new homes between \$400,000 and \$500,000 have an annual income of \$70,000 or less. Fifty per cent have an income of \$100,000 or less and are firmly middle class. Stephen Dupuis, the president and CEO of BILD, in a Globe article from May 1, said that the McGuinty tax on new housing "is really a backdoor way to raise taxes and is certain to deeply affect the GTA's growth."

People who buy houses in a community buy other things in that community. It's not a stretch to make the assumption that without people moving into a community and spending, that community will have great trouble rebounding from Ontario's current recession. In fact, the BILD report released today estimates that up to 21,200 jobs could be threatened just because of Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax.

That brings me to the other side of the issue. I think we've established the far-reaching implications of Mr. McGuinty's latest tax grab on potential homebuyers, but the Premier's new sales tax has far-reaching implications on other industries that serve them. OREA, the Ontario Real Estate Association, represents 47,000 brokers and salespeople who are members of the 42 real estate boards throughout the province. They say that the Premier's new sales tax will add over \$2,000 to the cost of a real estate transaction. Just so we're clear here, that's just for the taxes on the paperwork needed to seal a deal on a house purchased, whether it's a new home or a resale. According to an OREA press release dated March 26, real estate in Ontario last year accounted for \$56.6 billion in sales, \$6.01 billion in ancillary economic spending and \$1.35 billion in land transfer tax revenue to the provincial government. As far as overall employment numbers, OREA states in its release that real estate directly and indirectly employs 110,000 people in the province. In the same press release, Pauline Aunger, who is the president of the real estate association, made the following comments:

"Now is not the time to be erecting barriers to homeownership. We need consumers to invest in housing to help get our economy going again."

"These additional taxes could price some homebuyers, especially first-time homebuyers, right out of the market. Harmonizing will not help homebuyers in any way."

"From municipal land transfer taxes to skyrocketing property taxes, homeowners are being pushed to the

brink to accommodate increasing demands from government. A harmonized sales tax is yet another cash grab on Ontario's already overtaxed homeowners."

I digress for a moment to point out an important fact. It's clear that sources outside of the opposition parties agree that the Premier's new sales tax, under the guise of an economic plan to get us out of the recession, is just another way to generate revenue, pure and simple.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association, another example, represents 4,200 residential construction companies organized into 29 local associations across the province. This group says the residential construction industry contributes over \$38 billion to Ontario's economy and employs over 368,000 people across the province. In a press release dated April 8, the OHBA's president, Mr. Frank Giannone, says the Premier's new merged tax will negatively affect these construction jobs. Mr. Giannone said, "I just don't understand why we are spending billions in taxpayer dollars to bail out the auto industry, while destabilizing the residential construction industry with massive tax hikes that will eliminate tens of thousands of jobs."

I could go on and on all afternoon about the damaging impacts of the Dalton McGuinty sales tax on the people who wish to buy or sell a home or condo and the many people employed in the residential housing industry; however, several of my caucus colleagues would like to join the debate, and I want to afford them that opportunity.

In closing, based on their past votes on the tax issue, I would respectfully encourage the Liberal MPPs in this House to support the home ownership dreams of their constituents and all Ontarians. Stand up for the tens of thousands of jobs in the residential housing industry.

I would also call on their constituents to not let them get away with simply following Dalton McGuinty's directions. They were elected to represent you, not Dalton McGuinty and his backroom unelected advisers. Liberal MPPs can do the right thing today simply by voting in favour of our motion later this afternoon. Ontarians will be watching.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I want all the members opposite to know before I stand up, before I speak, I am going to be supporting this motion. I want to speak to whether Ontario should proceed with an HST, but I also want to speak on it from a different angle. I want to speak on it from a New Democrat angle, a social democratic angle. I want to speak about how this is going to affect ordinary people, particularly those who do not have a lot of income. This view will be very different, I suggest, from that of my Tory colleagues, and I will be talking a lot, as well, about the wrong-headed corporate tax giveaway which is also a part of this budget and which necessitates this government finding alternate sources of revenue.

Let's be clear: There is nothing at all harmonious about this tax, because what it is doing is taxing people who can ill afford to pay the tax in the first place. It is

taxing people on goods and services that were never before taxed. This new tax will tack on 8% to more goods and services than people had previously expected, had paid for and it is, in reality, a tax on a lot of everyday purchases.

Starting with the car or the van, how many people fill up the car or van at least once a week? If you have an ordinary car that gets ordinary mileage, it is not uncommon to put 50 or 60 litres of gasoline in a car per week. Before, that was not taxable, but it is going to be taxable now, and you're going to see that your gas costs, no matter what they are, are going to be 8% more than they were in the past.

1430

If you pay a monthly electricity bill, and literally almost every person in this province pays a monthly electricity bill; if you have a home heating bill, and we live in a cold northern climate, so everyone has a home heating bill, you are going to find out that in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, come next July, there is going to be an 8% increase.

If you have air conditioning—and a great many people choose to have air conditioning, even though we are in a cold northern climate, because the summers can be pretty hot and humid—you are going to find that air conditioning cost as well is going to be 8% more.

In the past, if you went out and bought a cheaper pair of shoes, you would find that those shoes were tax-exempt. Now you're going to find out that those shoes are no longer tax-exempt, and they too are going to cost you 8% more.

The newspaper and the magazine that you pick up in the morning are going to cost you 8% more. Having your hair done is going to cost you 8% more. Paying your Internet bill is going to cost you 8% more. Buying prepared foods, which you used to be able to go down and buy, if they were under \$4—and I remember the huge debate that took place in this Legislature—are now going to cost you 8% more.

I don't know what happened to that huge debate. I remember when former Finance Minister Greg Sorbara stood in this House and talked about taxing fast foods and those that cost under \$4. There was a hue and cry from one end of Ontario to the other, and there was a retreat that took place on that, because people understood that to have an ordinary coffee, to have a muffin in the morning, to have a hot dog from the vendor on the street, a slice of pizza, something to have over the lunch hour—some milk, you know?—it just did not seem real or rational to tack on 8% more. The restaurateurs from across this province were opposed to that because they saw declining sales. The government backed off. But the government is not backing off, or does not appear to be backing off, on this today.

The thing I really want to talk about is new homes. If there is one purchase that a family makes in its entire economic life, that is the one. That is the largest single expenditure they're ever likely to make. And look what happens: If you buy a new home for over \$400,000, you're going to get whacked.

I heard some of the catcalls from my friends on the other side: "A \$400,000 home—can you imagine that?"

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, I will tell you, if you live in some places in this province, you will not find many \$400,000 homes. Without a doubt, you will not find new \$400,000 homes.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: New, new.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: New ones, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, new. I don't know how many new \$400,000 homes—to my friend here from northern Ontario who keeps yelling "New"—are being built in Blind River, perhaps he might want to tell me how many or how many new \$400,000 homes are being built on Manitoulin Island or in the areas throughout northern and central Ontario. I will tell you that there are not a lot.

Today in the newspaper, as we opened it up, as everyone surmised from the beginning, we see that the places where new homes are being built for above \$400,000 are primarily in the little circle around Toronto, that place that we call the GTA. The overwhelming majority of homes that cost \$400,000 are being built in very close proximity to this Legislature. There is a reason for that. That's because this is the economic engine. This is the place where homes tend to cost more, whether they be new or whether they be used.

It is not unusual to travel the length and breadth of Toronto and to see signs going up on new homes advertising them for huge costs. I remember one day, in my own riding of Beaches—East York, going down to what was formerly the Greenwood racetrack. There are now hundreds and hundreds of new homes sitting there, and there was a big sign up on the corner of Queen and Woodbine. The big sign advertised that there were 10 homes for sale at about 2,500 or 3,000 square feet—pretty large homes, pretty nice homes, in the former Greenwood racetrack. There were only 10 left, and they were being advertised for \$1.4 million. I don't know how people could afford to live there, but that was the cost of a new home in my riding—I think, a pretty nice place, but a place, all the same, where that's the kind of cost that new homes are commanding.

As I go up and down all of the streets in the Beach and in East York, as older homes are taken down and new ones replace them—because the housing stock is all 50 or 60 years old—you will find that when those new homes are built and they go on the market, they go on the market for a lot more than \$400,000. So it is not surprising to me that the people who are going to get whacked are those who live in the downtown core of Toronto and in the GTA area that surrounds it. That is the place where most of the homes that are costing \$400,000 are being built and will be built in the future, so everyone who buys one of those is going to find a huge amount of tax. I know it's on a sliding scale from \$400,000 to \$500,000, but when it's \$500,000, it's 6% more than what is being paid here today—and you're looking at \$30,000, at minimum, of extra tax for any home that comes in above \$500,000.

Is that going to dissuade people from purchasing a new home, especially a nice, big new home? I would hazard a guess: absolutely, yes. That's what we heard today from BILD; that's what we heard from contractors; that's what we've heard from people across this entire province: It is going to hurt the construction industry.

These tax increases are going to be permanent.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm being heckled all over the place. Obviously, they don't like to hear the truth.

These tax increases are going to be permanent. It's not just for one year. It's not just for the recession. It's going to be forever. So, starting next July, for every new home that's built, for every cup of coffee that's bought, for every hairdo, you're going to see an extra 8%.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Talk about the tax credit.

Mr. Michael Prue: Now my friend is talking about his little, tiny tax credit. I'm going to talk about the little, tiny tax credit for exactly what it is: a pittance. It's \$300 for an individual, given out over three cheques, \$100 at a time, and it is an absolute pittance. The \$300 will completely run out just before the next election. Is that \$300 going to continue in perpetuity? I don't think so. But what is going to continue in perpetuity is this tax.

The tax increases are permanent. They will be felt immediately. They will be felt long after the Dalton dollars are handed out and forgotten.

With joblessness rising and people settling for lower pay, family incomes aren't rising. The tax hikes will have a real, measured impact on families' already strained budgets.

At the pump, this tax grab will add seven cents to a litre of gasoline today. That's seven cents on a litre of gasoline that is retailing in the 85 cent range. But we know that that price is not going to last forever. We know that as early as last summer, gas was retailing at \$1.35. So what is going to be added at 8% to the \$1.35 is about 10 cents a litre. So every time you fill up the gas tank, if your gas tank holds 50 litres of gas, you're going to be paying \$3.50 to \$5 extra right away. And if that cost goes up, you are going to see the cost go up as well. So every time you fill up the tank, you're going to remember what this government has done long after you've spent that \$100 cheque.

We're not just talking about nickels and dimes here. We're talking about how much this is going to cost the average family. Most people, and new car dealers will tell you this, drive their car about 20,000 kilometres a year. That's pretty much the average that a person will put on a new car built here in Ontario—20,000 kilometres a year, and the gas associated with that. We are looking quite literally at \$300 or \$400 per year just out of the pockets of struggling families to pay for that. When all the extra costs of day-to-day purchases are factored in, we're talking about a lot more. We're talking a lot more from families.

1440

The McGuinty government is claiming that companies will have lower prices as a result of their significant cost savings. I've heard this across the floor, and it makes me

want to chuckle because what they're asking me to believe is that when you lower the cost to the companies—when you factor in the lower corporate taxes and you see that the companies aren't going to have to pay as much in PST and that individuals will have to pay more—the companies will pass on these huge savings. I've never heard such balderdash in my entire life. After all, with the corporate tax breaks and the end of sales taxes on inputs, corporations are the big winners.

How will it get cheaper? Do you think that Exxon is going to lower the price of gasoline because we're paying 8% more? I don't think so. Do you think that General Motors is going to reduce the cost of a car, if in fact they still produce them? I don't think so. Do you think that Tim Hortons is going to decrease the cost of a cup of coffee because we're paying 8% more? I don't think so. I don't know where people get this idea that there are suddenly going to be lower prices to accommodate the extra 8% that ordinary taxpayers are paying.

Will Enbridge, Thunder Bay Hydro, Hydro Ottawa or Union Gas drop their rates to offset the 8% increase? I don't think so. I haven't heard of a single company yet say that they are going to now lower their prices in deference to the consumers who are going to pay 8% more. It's simply not going to happen.

The companies have an obligation to their corporate shareholders. They have an obligation to their board of directors. They have an obligation to maximize their profits, and they're not about to reduce those profits simply because consumers are being forced to pay 8% more. Nothing is going to cost less.

I've heard this several times from the cabinet when they stand up in question period, that they anticipate that there are going to be reductions in prices. I don't believe Ontarians believe this, and I don't believe it's ever been shown to happen anywhere as well.

Here are some of the numbers from the report by the Building Industry and Land Development Association released today. That report says that HST threatens 21,200 construction jobs and will cost buyers of new homes at least \$800 million; that the HST will disproportionately affect new housing in the greater Toronto area; and that over one third of all new homes sold in the GTA cost more than \$400,000, and even a 10% to 15% reduction in demand due to a job-killing tax would mean 7,400 to 11,100 fewer units being built. This, in turn, would result in up to \$1.1 billion in lost wages due to lost jobs. This will be disastrous, absolutely disastrous.

I also want to talk about the corporate tax cut. The corporate tax cut is part of this government's budget process. The corporate tax cut is given out to corporations who are going to see a windfall. They're going to have less and less taxes to pay for the upkeep of what we consider to be essential in this province.

Now, I can say that everybody wants to see a tax cut. I'm sure that corporations want to see a tax cut. I'm sure they're going to be thankful for the tax cut, and I'm sure they're going to go out and make their shareholders happy. But this isn't going to create any jobs.

We watched this whole trickle-down theory take place in the United States throughout all of the period of Reagan, Bush and everyone else. The trickle-down theory: Give big corporate tax cuts and watch the economy boom. I want to say to everyone who's in this room, everyone who's watching it on television, that it didn't work. We know it didn't work. You see daily that it doesn't work. The big corporate tax cuts didn't do anything to further the economy or to help ordinary people. There was no trickle down. There will never be a trickle down.

What this government is choosing to do is to take the corporate tax cuts and give them to already successful corporations that, in turn, will only do one thing with them: They will maximize their profits. That's what they're supposed to do, that's what we expect them to do, that's what they've always done and that's what they're going to do here, because these corporate tax cuts are not to create jobs. If you want to create jobs, you give the money to struggling companies; you give the money to companies that prove they are going to hire and keep people working; you give the money to companies that absolutely need it.

These monies are being given indiscriminately to all corporations, but in order to get a corporate tax cut, you have to be making a profit. We are giving money to profitable corporations. That's what you're choosing to do in this budget: give money to profitable corporations. This is not an argument about whether or not to give it to Chrysler or General Motors or to the forest industry or to all those tens of thousands of people who are losing jobs. This is about giving it to profitable corporations, and that is what this government has chosen to do. Corporate tax cuts are not there to create jobs.

We know what happened in the last round of corporate tax cuts in this province, we know what happened in the last round of corporate tax cuts in this country and we daily witness what happened in the United States: The corporations keep the money. Does anyone there expect that that's not what they are going to do? Does anyone there expect that this is not going to be a chance to maximize profits; to put up the flag for the shareholders and say, "Our company is worth more money"; and to sell additional stocks and say, "Our company is making a profit"? That's what this money is going to end up doing. It's not going to create jobs, it's not going to create wealth and it's not going to create prosperity in this province.

Ontarians have seen this movie before. They didn't believe it then, and they're not going to believe it now. They don't believe it, because politicians have tried to pitch them trickle-down economics for years and years and we've seen the results; we witness them daily on the stock market and with the announcement every month of another 30,000 people in Ontario losing their jobs.

In a recent case study—we don't have to look much further than the United States—years of corporate tax cuts have gone hand in hand with deregulation. The result is millions of families losing their jobs, their savings and their homes.

The budget couldn't have been clearer that this government is now committed to that same disparaged, right-wing, trickle-down theory. They're giving \$4.5 billion dollars in corporate tax cuts over the next three years. Some people have called this obscene. It's obscene because the tax on corporate profits and the companies that need help in a brutal recession are not the companies that are making profits right now, and they're not the companies that are getting any part of this money.

I'm at a bit of a loss to understand how the government came to that conclusion. The only thing I can think of is that there were 4.5 billion reasons why they completely reversed themselves from being opposed to a harmonized sales tax just a few months ago, to being in favour of a harmonized sales tax. The 4.5 billion reasons all came out of Ottawa, and the 4.5 billion reasons were all dollars given by Finance Minister Flaherty, who of course is a proponent of the harmonized sales tax and gave the Ontario government, I would suggest, something they fell for, hook, line and sinker.

They looked at the monies that were being made available to do this and reversed years of opposition. We do know from reading the newspapers, and by the harried and worried look on some of the backbenchers in the Liberal Party when this was raised, that this took them quite a bit by shock. We know that they within the backbench were not consulted, we know that those within the caucus were not consulted and we also know that even some members of cabinet were not privy to the signed deal between the finance minister—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Michael, you should get your eyes checked.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend here, who wears glasses, tells me I should get my eyes checked. I suggest that if you took yours off, you might not be so myopic. Madam Speaker—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: That's a personal attack, Speaker.

1450

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, it could be, but I did not attack without being attacked first.

After all, Madam Speaker, it was only last November that the Premier and his finance minister rejected the HST recommendation made by his very own Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. I don't know what happened since November, except that the finance minister in Canada came up with a deal you couldn't refuse.

In fact, when the report came out, the Premier worried about the impact of HST on families, and I quote the Premier: "Not only from our treasury perspective but from the perspective of consumers, some things like children's snowsuits, home heating fuel and other things like that that are really important to consumers would go up in cost." Minister Duncan added that it wasn't the time to "tinker" with the province's tax regime. But here we are; it's been done all the same.

This is a motion being made by the Conservatives. The Conservatives are opposed to the HST. I find myself in opposition to the HST as well. I think New Democrats

looking at what has been done here find that it is a regressive tax. It is going to hurt people in ways that they cannot possibly understand. It is going to hurt starting now. We're starting to see opposition from people who sell homes, opposition from people who build homes, opposition from people who work in restaurants and the fast-food industry, opposition from people who sell gasoline—opposition literally from everyone.

The government can sit there and they can think about this all they want. The government can sit there and say that everything is going fine. But I read the letters to the editor too. I read them in the Toronto dailies; I read them in the dailies outside of town. I have yet to see, save and except people on the government bench writing, a single person who supports this new tax regime. They all see the \$1,000 that is being given to families as some form of bribe with their own money, in three instalments, with the last instalment coming out just before the next election. If you are a single individual, you're going to get \$300, and that's the maximum that you're going to see. That will easily be eaten up in terms of the cost on gasoline, the cost on home heating fuel and the cost, at 8%, on your electricity. There will be very little left over from that. We do know that it's going to bring in hundreds of millions of dollars of extra revenue to this government that is going to come from consumers. At the same time, we're seeing a loss of money from the corporate sector which has been well calculated.

We believe that this is a bad budget. We believe that this is a bad measure. The Conservatives, in attacking it, are only attacking one side, but I find myself in agreement with the side on which they are attacking; that is, the HST is the wrong tax at the wrong time. It is going to hurt consumers, and someone needs to stand up for them. If the opposition are the only ones who are going to stand up for consumers, then so be it, but I think it behooves all the members of the backbench to say something about this. If you can't say it in this Legislature, then please use the opportunity tomorrow in caucus to exercise your voice and your vote and tell the cabinet that you think this is wrong-headed.

I do believe this is a seminal moment for this party and for this government. Should this bill pass, should this HST continue and should it be implemented next July, as is the plan, you are going to see the fortunes of your party decline, and decline rapidly. People will understand this in the same way that they understood the hated GST back in the time of Mulroney. You saw what happened to that once-mighty party. Be prepared to see the same thing happen to yours, because this is exactly what makes people mad in the long term. It's being nicked and dined; it's being eight-percented time after time, purchase after purchase. I would suggest that the backbenchers have a duty and an obligation to their own party to help to ensure that when a mistake is being made, their voice is heard. If you sit back and say nothing, if you sit back and do nothing, then be prepared to take the same fate. At the same time, the consumers of this province will not stand for what is being done. The Conservatives on this issue have it right, and I will be supporting them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It is my pleasure to rise today and have a few minutes to speak on the opposition day motion. As comes as no surprise today, the opposition parties are doing what they're wont to do—we respect that; we expect that. But it will come as no surprise to those in the Legislature and listening that we come at this from a bit of a different perspective.

I'm going to begin today where I guess a lot of our members will begin. We've got a long lineup of people on our side who are willing and ready to speak to this today, and they will be doing so in short order. I've got a sense that they're likely to begin where I am going to begin, and that is to deal with the obvious contradictions in the positions taken by both opposition parties, first the official opposition and then the members of the third party.

What we've come forward with today is clearly a policy position that has been long advocated by the members of the official opposition provincially and with their federal cousins. Certainly, they have been talking about doing this for as long as I've been around here, going on six years now. During my time on municipal council, I think that this sort of discussion was already beginning to resonate within the ranks of provincial Conservatives, even back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as I remember it. So here we find ourselves today, debating this very issue that was a policy piece that they were putting forward for a significant period of time and, I think, if truth be known, today still do.

It must be a very difficult position, especially for those who find themselves on the leadership trail right now. We've all got the quotes. They're asked the question, "Do you believe in the single sales tax? If you were to form a government in 2011, would you repeal the single sales tax?" I'm not going to repeat the quotes that are here today that we've all got.

I almost feel a little bit sorry for them, truth be known, watching how they're stumbling and bumbling as they attempt to answer the question. I do feel a bit sorry for them. It's a difficult position that they're in. But clearly, it's patently obvious to everybody around this place who knows the history of this issue that that party, the official opposition, has long been supportive of what is going on here today, and quite frankly, we know that they still are.

The members of the third party—I listened intently to the member who spoke on behalf of the New Democrats earlier today—have taken a position opposed to this as well. I also find that very interesting, given that the very recent history on this issue shows that their former leader, Mr. Hampton, a little more than one year ago had written a letter to our Premier, asking the Premier to increase the provincial sales tax by one percentage point. That was just a very short time ago.

Mr. Michael Prue: For what purpose?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, the purpose—the point would be simply that it would still be a tax increase on the people of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker.

The point is—the purpose aside for a moment—the point is that he had advocated for a tax increase, one percentage point on the provincial sales tax, that, as I understand it, would have been a \$2-billion tax increase on the people of Ontario.

When you go forward with that position, what you see missing from the New Democratic position is that while they were advocating for increases in the provincial sales tax, what was missing was any sort of tax reduction for the people in the province of Ontario. Unlike what is in our budget, that was not attenuated with the position brought forward by your former leader: simply a tax increase, but no tax decreases. There are going to be permanent personal income tax reductions for people in the province of Ontario, going forward. The member knows that.

I have to go to the point that they continue to spend more time on, I think, to be fair, than they probably should—I wrote it down. I think the member's words were, "More wrong-headed corporate tax giveaways." I think that's the language that the member used.

Absolutely, we have corporate tax reductions in this province in our budget and as part of our package, going forward. The member of the third party—and, I think it's fair to say, almost all members of that party—never seem to support this, but what they always seem to forget is that people work in those corporations.

I take, for example, in my riding right now, Abitibi-Bowater. There are 1,100 employees there right now—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Not today they don't.

But you don't think those people, in their head office in the United States of America, as a multinational corporation, aren't sitting back and looking forward to when they get out of this creditor protection, and aren't viewing the landscape of where the best places on the planet are to invest their money? If you don't think they're thinking about that, then I think that's unfortunate, and probably a statement that you shouldn't be making. We have significantly reduced corporate tax rates for these people.

1500

But more to the point, here is where the contradiction goes even further. The members of the third party like to stand often and talk about energy rates when it comes to the pulp and paper industry in the province of Ontario. I'm supportive of that effort. We worked very hard. So far, for that company in Thunder Bay, we've brought about \$40 million to the table for them—one plant—on energy plant reductions, and in this budget going forward beginning October 1, 2009, there will be a further almost \$20 per hour reduction in their energy rate. But here's the rub—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Here's the rub. The members of the third party want us to do that for that corporation, but they don't want us to do the single sales tax that will allow these groups and companies to be significantly more competitive on an international landscape. There's a complete contradiction in the position that they take; they do it all the time.

I'll tell you where I'm going to land. I'm going to land on the side of the people who provide the employment in the province. As I said, this one company supports 1,100 jobs in my community, and they find themselves right now in creditor protection, owing \$6 billion, \$2 billion of it due yesterday. If you don't think that they're viewing the landscape to make a determination about where is the best place to maintain their investments, whether they've got 20 or 30 or 40 plants left operating when they come out of this, you'd better believe they are looking very closely at where is the best place where they want to remain operational, whether it's in Ontario, BC or anywhere else.

My time is almost up, but I want to close by saying simply this, and everybody knows this: Four other provinces in Canada have already done this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Members, I'm having trouble hearing.

Mr. Bill Mauro: —130 countries have already done this, we've seen a very clear signal going forward from Manitoba that they're very seriously considering doing this; and I believe that in a week and a half, should the Liberals win the provincial election out in B.C., we're very likely to see them do that as well. The reason they want to do it is that they don't want to leave Ontario with a significant competitive business advantage when it comes to where people are going to make their investments in this country. There's a lot of evidence to support why we've done what we've done, and I thank you for your time.

My time is up, and I yield the floor to my other members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak to the Progressive Conservative motion to debate the impact on the proposed harmonized sales tax and what it will do to Ontario's housing market. I know e-mails from realtors are going to everyone's office here. They are concerned that this new McGuinty sales tax will affect their businesses and their livelihoods, and frankly they have a right to be concerned.

Dalton McGuinty's latest tax grab will make it even harder for families to realize the dream of home ownership; families hoping to experience the pride of owning a home, who have already been hit with McGuinty's skyrocketing property assessments and land transfer taxes.

Anyone looking to buy or sell a house listed at any price will not be able to escape the McGuinty sales tax. If you are not taxed on the sale, the Liberals will tax you somewhere else along the way to owning your new home. People will be forced to pay more taxes on ser-

vices associated with real estate transaction, such as legal fees, moving expenses, real estate commissions, development charges and home inspection fees. The Ontario Real Estate Association estimates that this could add over \$2,000 to a resale home transaction.

If you decide to renovate an existing property, you will be taxed on home renovations and landscaping. Even Energy Star appliances for your home will be subject to Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax.

In my own riding of Dufferin-Caledon, the average cost of a home is just under \$430,000, according to the Toronto Real Estate Board. The McGuinty sales tax will only exempt the homes selling for less than \$400,000; again, they're hitting the middle class. This McGuinty sales tax grab will have an effect on urban and rural areas across Ontario.

I received a letter from Dalerose Country Inc., a custom home builder in Orangeville. They're very concerned about the negative impacts the McGuinty sales tax will have on new homebuyers, residential renovators and employment in the residential construction industry. Dalerose Country is concerned that the Liberal government is unwilling to resolve unclear transition issues, therefore creating tremendous uncertainty for consumers and the thousands of construction workers, professionals and others employed in affiliated industries in Dufferin-Caledon and the surrounding communities. Dalerose Country has raised five key issues, and I would like to bring them forward today:

Inflation and rising home prices in Dufferin-Caledon will erode affordability over time, as fewer and fewer new homes qualify for a rebate. Ontarians will be subject to the highest cumulative tax burden on new homes in North America. Businesses will be deterred from coming to Ontario because their employees will face the most highly taxed jurisdiction in North America.

The provincial government is proposing billions in taxpayer dollars to bail out the auto industry, and yet the Liberals are willingly destabilizing the residential construction industry with massive tax hikes that will eliminate tens of thousands of jobs. A blended sales tax will drive some renovators and home builders to the underground economy.

The proposed structure of the blended tax on new homes has significant flaws, specifically between the \$400,000 and \$500,000 threshold. Middle-class consumers will be subject to massive tax increases.

The residential construction industry is very concerned about affordability for future generations of homebuyers and renters.

In a report prepared by the Building Industry and Land Development Association, or BILD, they have estimated the tax burden that will now be placed on new homes in Ontario. This McGuinty sales tax will result in a very large increase in sales tax imposed on new homes. For an average single, detached house in Toronto, the total sales tax paid will be just above \$96,000—\$96,000—and if you can imagine, the McGuinty Liberals consider this a positive move. This is an incredible amount of money during this troubling economic time.

Since the McGuinty sales tax would not apply to the sale of existing homes—for now—this would put the new housing market at a competitive disadvantage with the resale market.

The adverse consequences on homebuyers, housing affordability, the housing industry and the economy in general will be damaging.

The new housing industry is a significant creator of employment—and this is a time when Ontario needs to be creating and sustaining employment, not killing it. Based on 2007 housing stats in Toronto, residential development accounted for nearly \$6 billion in production, generated more than 53,000 jobs, created \$2.5 billion in wages, and produced \$1.3 billion in income, sales and payroll taxes. But that wasn't enough for Dalton McGuinty. This prosperity will drastically shrink when the McGuinty sales tax grab is implemented on July 1, 2010.

What about Ontario realtors? I know that everyone has received hundreds of e-mails from them, as have I. Not only do realtors have to deal with this economic downturn, they have to worry about how the McGuinty sales tax grab will hurt their business.

Ontario's real estate industry is essential to the provincial economy. In 2008, real estate in Ontario accounted for \$56.6 billion in sales, over \$6 billion in economic spending, and \$1.35 billion in land transfer tax revenue to the provincial government. In addition, the real estate industry employs 110,000 Ontarians directly or indirectly.

This Liberal initiative is going to drive Ontarians into the underground economy. Construction workers and home renovators are going to undercut the costs of those working above board, therefore forcing more and more workers to enter the underground economy.

The federal budget recently introduced a \$750 tax credit for first-time buyers to offset closing costs and to encourage home ownership. However, a home bought for over \$403,000 will use all of the federal tax credit, paying the incremental portion of the new McGuinty sales tax. The federal government giveth; the McGuinty Liberals taketh away.

Leith Moore, chair of the Building Industry and Land Development Association, has said that Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government have totally missed the mark on this one. He said, "It ignores the fact that housing is a long-term shelter investment which continues to pay annual property taxes, unlike other personal goods and services."

Nowhere in this Liberal government's platform did they mention the possibility of blending Ontario's two sales taxes or even the prospect of discussing changing taxation rules with the federal government, and yet here we have the HST.

Dalton McGuinty's sales tax grab will affect all Ontarians, but homebuyers and homeowners will be particularly hard hit. Dalton McGuinty needs to listen to his constituents, my constituents, and all of Ontario. Listen when they say that this is the wrong time to move forward with this ill-advised plan to yet again increase taxes for families across Ontario.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I certainly am pleased to enter the debate. I just have to say that, when I hear the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Dufferin–Caledon talking about the pride in home ownership, from this side of the House, we understand that, and there has been such significant work done.

What I'm going to focus on is just the actual property tax, specifically when I hear the member from Leeds–Grenville talk about the Wizard of Oz and going down the yellow brick road. I must say, where was his voice when all the downloading happened in the previous government—service after service, and no consulting with the municipalities, just one after the other. So when I see the member rise in the House today, to stand and talk about property taxes, what did he think was going to happen when they downloaded all those services to the municipalities? Of course, the only venue that the municipalities had to raise the needed revenue for those services was through property taxes. The member was in cabinet at that time, so I can only assume that he was on the yellow brick road and really not in cabinet bringing forward his concerns—or he never actually found the path that led to the table that was actually discussing these issues. He could have provided input into it and then might have done some of the things that we did as a government.

When we think about the uploading that has happened and the work that has been done with MPAC, we recognize that there's more work to do. It's something that one must continually work with. But when I hear them talk about the pride of ownership—we understand that, and that is why we have brought forward a very comprehensive tax package. The members across the way would lead you to believe that everyone in Ontario is going to be negatively affected. There couldn't be anything further from the truth: 93% of the people of Ontario will not be affected.

What they won't talk about from across the way is the fact that this gives the business community the ability to adjust their input costs. They don't want to talk about that. What they want to talk about is a very simplistic message: a trip down the yellow brick road. You sprinkle a little bit of fairy dust around, you click your red heels and you just talk about simple things. But people understand. People take the time to figure out whether this a policy that will in fact move us forward in Ontario? The people understand; they get it. They aren't swayed by glib messages coming from across the way.

But I want to get back to property taxes for just one moment. When the downloading happened, they knew that the municipalities could ill afford it and so they would be raised. But they just did it: They forced amalgamations and continued on, and so now we hear the lectures from across the way. But since we have formed government, this has been part of the transformation. We've uploaded public health, we've uploaded disability

support, we've uploaded drug benefits, we've uploaded ambulances and we've also uploaded Ontario Works. There are percentages, and the municipalities understand that.

But we knew that there had to be a fundamental shift within property taxation that would allow the people of Ontario to not only purchase their property for the first time, but also to keep their properties. So as part of our comprehensive tax package, we increased—we doubled—the seniors' property tax credit from \$250 to \$500. These are two things that affect not only our young people buying their first home, but also our seniors. We've adjusted the property tax that goes forward on their properties; we have brought forward a property tax credit for our seniors; and for young people starting families, the \$600 child benefit—that's what it is today—is going up to \$1,100 per child per year. I can tell you that that will make a difference for a lot of people who are raising children.

The reconfiguration of MPAC: I know from my riding that something that was very important was the reverse onus on MPAC to establish how they arrive at the assessed value. The system before put the onus on the people, and forced people into areas of expertise they were not comfortable with. The reverse onus gave property owners the ability to go in and see. You can go to the website and see how they arrived at the assessed value. There will be categories of four properties that you can compare your property to. So it really does give you a scan of what you need to know.

We've also come forward with property tax credits and personal tax credits. I know the members from across the way will tell us that this is just a tax grab. Once again, these are glib statements that are made because they're simple, they're easy and they roll off your tongue. But they actually have no meaning. In fact, this will cost the Ontario coffers over \$2 billion.

When I have a call from my constituents, one of the things I say is, "Go on the website, punch in your numbers and you will know what your contribution will be," and let them be the judge of what that difference will be, and they do. They go in, they calculate it and add up the difference, and so far they have come forward reflecting the numbers we have brought forward: 93% of people will not be affected and will end up with more money in their pockets than they have today.

Thank you for allowing me to enter the debate. We have many more members who are very anxious to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Obviously, it's a real pleasure to be able to bring forward many concerns that constituents of Nepean–Carleton have with the harmonized sales tax.

The previous member spoke about the issues that the opposition—whether it's the Progressive Conservative Party or the New Democratic Party—have as being glib, that they roll off the tongue. I would beg her to remember a solemn promise Mr. McGuinty made in the 2003

election. Again, he made another promise in the 2007 election. He said, "I won't raise your taxes." That was a solemn promise made by a leader of a political party who would become Premier not once but twice and who broke his promise, who looked at the people of this province and said, "I won't raise your taxes," yet he brought in the single largest increase in taxes in this province's history, called the health tax. What did he do a year and a half after he was re-elected with a larger majority? He broke his tax promise again with an even larger tax hike on the people of this province, called the harmonized sales tax.

Despite what the member opposite says, this will impact more than 93% of the population. It will impact every single resident in this province. Every time they purchase a good or service, it's going to be 8% higher. That means that whether you're building a new home or purchasing soup and salad or putting gas in your car or purchasing Internet services or you want to buy a newspaper or you want to send a letter to your friend, or even, sadly, if you, in the process of grieving or dying, have to allot 8% more on what that is going to cost. I couldn't think of anything more crass than telling the people of Ontario, if they're in the dying process or a loved one is going to pass, that not only will this probably be the worst day of their lives, but they will also be taxed. There was once a time when they said there are two things that are certain in this world: Death and taxes. Now there are three things: Death, taxes and the certainty that Mr. McGuinty will tax you in death.

1520

Unfortunately Mr. McGuinty and his—I don't know if I want to call them the blind mice, the trained seals, the sheep that follow their leader, but the real challenge that we are faced with on this side of the chamber is that the public no longer believes in the government, because the government is not listening to them. At this point in time, the Liberal Party and the Liberal government are only doing what they are told. They are not listening to their constituents. I could think of no bigger betrayal of a community than sending their leader, their civic leader, their member of provincial parliament to this chamber and they are ignored.

I'm going to read into the record several pieces of correspondence from my constituents, which you must remember because you sit among us in this chamber of commoners who are elected to serve the people. You're getting the same e-mails that I am that are telling me this is not the time to put forward a massive increase in taxes, and you can't tell me that my colleagues opposite aren't receiving them. In fact, those members from Ottawa who sit in ridings right next door to mine are oftentimes sending me e-mails which are copying members from other Ottawa-area ridings. So I'm actually getting correspondence from Liberal ridings because they're not being perceived—these Liberal MPPs—as listening to their constituents.

Here's one. It's an interesting one, because it's very topical with respect to the resolution in front of us: "Dear Ms. MacLeod:

"As a resident in your riding considering the purchase of a new home, I'm writing today to express my disappointment over the 2009 Ontario budget proposal to harmonize sales taxes.

"Harmonization will add more than \$2,000 to the cost of a home transaction, eroding my ability to buy a home in Ontario. Specifically, provincial sales taxes will now be levied on legal fees, appraisals, real estate commissions, home inspection fees, moving costs and other services related to a real estate transaction.

"As an already cash-strapped Ontarian concerned about how my family will make it through this recession, I am astonished that the province would introduce a new tax at a time like this. Not only will this affect my ability to purchase a home, but it's also going to increase my daily cost of living with the addition of PST on gasoline, personal and professional services, home heating, and renovations, etc...."

This is signed by Nicole Maradea from Craig Henry Drive in Nepean.

I've got another e-mail here from Timothy Ward. This is interesting because this, of course, went to the Premier of Ontario, who is my next-door neighbour in Ottawa. Those of you from Toronto, which is the majority in this House, might not be aware that Nepean-Carleton and Ottawa South actually share a combined border. This is to the MPP for Ottawa South. He happens to be the Liberal Party leader and Premier.

"Good morning:

"I recently wrote to the Premier expressing my concerns over the potential disastrous effects that this proposal will have on the economy in general and in my life in particular. Not only will it raise the costs of everything, but after years of saving, I am now in the position to purchase a new home. Will I still be able to?" Of course, this is from Timothy Ward.

I think Timothy and Nicole helped make our point today. I would hope that the Liberals, those Liberals who represent ridings similar to mine and everyone else's, will listen to us, because this is a concern, it's important and it needs to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I think it's time that we have a close look at the Conservative motion here and try and deconstruct it a little bit. What does the motion actually say? Well, to the Legislative Assembly, it calls upon the Premier to acknowledge that due to the current economic downturn, this is the wrong time to move forward with this HST plan—the wrong time to move forward. Implicit in that statement that it's the wrong time to move forward is the flip side of that statement: that they recognize that there's a right time to move forward with the harmonization of the sales tax. So, while the Tories, in this motion, make it appear to members of the public that they're opposed to the harmonization of the sales tax, they're not. They're in favour of the harmonization of the sales tax, and they're making an argument about when the right time is to impose that harmonization.

When I say that they're in favour of the harmonization, there's some documentary evidence that supports that.

Here is a quote from the interim leader of the PC Party, Bob Runciman, from a scrum on March 25, 2009: "In principle, we think it's something that should occur." They agree with harmonization.

Christine Elliott, on Saturday, April 4, 2009, in the St. Catharines Standard: "I can only say that (for) Ontario right now, our party's position is that the harmonization is something that we could take a look at perhaps in the future...." So there's the incoming leader who's supporting it.

Frank Klees is quoted in the Kirkland Lake Northern News. He's a little more circumspect. He said, "If it is not possible to dismantle" the HST, "then we'll take an appropriate action to reduce sales taxes to provide" other forms of relief. There's someone else in favour of it.

John Tory, on January 22, 2009: "I think it's something that many people in business and elsewhere say is going to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario and create jobs."

Peter Shurman, on March 24, 2009: "If there's an announcement on Thursday that what we're going for is harmonization, I am not saying that harmonization ultimately is a bad idea."

Let's have a look and see what Tim Hudak said. This is from the Kirkland Lake Northern News of April 6, 2009: "Asked if he would repeal the" harmonization "tax if the Conservatives won government in 2011, Hudak would only say, 'I'm not convinced that the tax that Dalton McGuinty has brought forward is actually going to go into place.'" He won't make the very clear statement.

None of those Conservatives whose names I've just read out will make a clear statement that they'll rescind the harmonization sales tax if it's approved by this Legislature, yet they've got this motion before us that says this is the wrong time to move forward with this.

In my view, this motion is disingenuous. It doesn't mean what it appears to say. What they're trying to convince people that it says is, "Look, we're opposed to harmonization." But they won't come out and make that clear, unequivocal statement. They waffle-waffle with this: "Well, this is the wrong time to move forward with this initiative." Clearly they recognize that it's a good initiative to move forward with, and clearly that's what the leaders and the senior members of the Conservative Party have said in the past. Bob Runciman, John Tory, Peter Shurman, Christine Elliott, Tim Hudak: That's the senior leadership of the PC Party.

It gets a little better than that, because in their 2009 pre-budget submission, the Ontario Conservative Party wrote, "The official opposition calls on this government to heed the call of the federal government and take immediate action to fix Ontario's uncompetitive tax structure."

Let us go back and see what the federal government wants to do in terms of the tax initiative that they want to

talk about, that the Ontario PC Party in its 2009 pre-budget submission supported. Jim Flaherty said in his budget that a single sales tax “is the single most important step that provinces with RSTs could take to stimulate new business investment, create jobs and improve Canada’s overall ... competitiveness.” Shortly after that statement was made, and again I come back to it, the Ontario PC 2009 pre-budget submission endorsed what Flaherty had to say about harmonizing the HST.

1530

Again, I say that when you take a close look at this motion and you reflect on the words, “This is the wrong time to bring this HST initiative forward”—that’s the substance of the motion—and you couple the wording of that motion with the previous statements of virtually the entire front bench of the Ontario PC leadership, you have to ask yourself what’s in their mind.

Why won’t they come out and make a clear statement about their opposition to HST? Why won’t the interim leader of the PC Party answer, when asked the direct question, “If you win the election in 2011, will you repeal the HST?” That’s the question that was asked of Mr. Hudak, and rather than say, “No, we won’t repeal it,” or “Yes, we will repeal it,” it’s waffle, waffle. To quote Hudak, “I’m not convinced that the tax that Dalton McGuinty has brought forward is actually going to go into place.” He won’t answer that direct question.

Why won’t they answer that direct question? Because the harmonization of the GST is a good thing. It’s good for Ontario; it’s good for the economy. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party knows that. They should stand up and be straight with the people of Ontario and not try to baffle us with this opposition motion which talks about “the wrong time to introduce it.”

It’s the right time to introduce it; it’s going to strengthen our economy. The motion is disingenuous in my view, and just in closing, let me read the definition from the Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language, 1997. The definition of “disingenuous” is “not straightforward or candid; crafty.” This is a crafty motion. It’s not straightforward—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Oftentimes we’re in here and there will be a point of order raised for imputing motive, and I think that this covers it in terms of talking about crafty and disingenuous. I think that maybe the member ought to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That is not a point of order, but will the member withdraw that comment?

Mr. David Zimmer: I will withdraw the statement that the definition that I read in from Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language defines “disingenuous” as “crafty.” I withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I guess we’ve just seen another example of how government members like to play ostrich and stick their heads in the sand. In fact, the Toronto

Star, April 28, reported that finance minister Duncan insists the harmonized sales tax is a hit with Ontario voters. I wish to indicate otherwise in my presentation. Even plugged ears must have heard by now that in tough economic times, the last thing we need is more tax hikes.

Ontario’s new tax—it’s the one that is a tax on just about everything, the so-called harmonized sales tax—means we pay more for meals under \$4, cellphones, telephones, Internet, coffee and coffins.

If I were to accurately quote the kind of comments that I have been receiving on this McGuinty 13% tax, I would actually have to commence with a disclaimer, and the disclaimer would be: “The following speech may contain coarse language and mature subject matter. Viewer discretion is advised.” This is the kind of feedback that I receive in restaurants, in cattle barns and at gas stations.

This 13% tax, this blended sales tax, is known as the BST, the BS tax. It’s known as the DST, the Dalton sales tax. Speaker, I will explain to you that because taxpayers feel they are being treated like mushrooms and left in the dark, they do refer to it as the HST. They’re not referring to “harmonized sales tax”; they’re referring to a horse manure tax, and I won’t explain what the “s” stands for. This is what I’m hearing. The HST starts with “horse,” and we’re going to hear that for the next year or two. I do feel that those who are phoning government members opposite with their concerns about this hare-brained scheme to raise these taxes at a time when the economy has brought so many people to their knees—people are convinced this tax is not going to fly.

The Ontario Real Estate Association—we’ve heard an awful lot about the concerns of home builders and carpenters and people who are involved in our housing industry. The new tax will add approximately \$2,000 to the cost of a real estate transaction—\$2,000 out of the average guy’s pocket. We see the PST now being applied to legal fees, moving costs, commissions, mortgage and insurance premiums, title insurance—the list goes on and on. They’ve come up with a figure now of \$300 million a year in the costs of resale homes. What does that lead to? I’m afraid that’s going to lead us further down the road of a cash-only economy.

I built my own house. If I was building houses for other people here, why would I continue past \$400,000 and accrue these kinds of added tax burdens? Are we going to see a builder stop at \$400,000, hand it over to the next guy? “You finish the drywalling, the electrical, the plumbing, the painting and finish off the house.” I’m afraid that’s what we’re going to see. We see that with so many other commodities. I think of tobacco taxes, for example.

We also know that this may well become a bigger hit than the so-called health tax. By the way, I guess my question across the floor is, how’s that one working out? I pose that to government members. Government members will recall the throng of hospital protestors who were out front last week. I would suggest that this new McGuinty 13% tax is not going to work out very well.

This so-called economic measure was proposed, we were told, to alleviate the strain on business; I can say

that the bulk of the complaints to my office have come from business people. They understand that this kind of tax increase will spook their consumers—their customers—to postpone purchases, particularly the big-ticket items. These are the kinds of big-ticket items that are required to get our steelworkers back on the job, our auto industry, farmers, families—pretty well everybody; and when I say “everybody,” I do get an awful lot of not only phone calls, but letters and e-mails.

I really feel that the concern out there is that this government is insulting their intelligence, bringing in the so-called harmonized sales tax and then offering a rebate cheque in return, essentially paying people off with their own money. There’s that old saying, “You can bribe Peter to pay Paul. Peter complains, and after a while, Paul questions why this is going on as well.”

I have also received a number of e-mails, and I’ll just quote in part from one:

“Dear Mr. Barrett,

“As a resident in your riding considering the purchase of a home, I’m writing today to express my disappointment over the 2009 Ontario budget proposal to harmonize sales taxes.” It goes on and talks about the \$2,000 cost and the various fees. I’ll quote further:

“As an already cash-strapped Ontarian concerned about how my family will make it through this recession, I am astonished that the province would introduce a new tax at a time like this. Not only will this affect my ability to purchase a home but it’s also going to increase my daily cost of living with the addition of PST on gasoline, personal and professional services, home heating and renovations, etc.

1540

“I am looking for a home in the resale market and the single tax transition benefit does not even come close to covering the new tax on my future home purchase.

“Please tell Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister Dwight Duncan that the government should be helping Ontarians like myself achieve the dream of home ownership. Please put pressure on the government to introduce a HST rebate program for resale housing so that I can purchase a home.”

I have hundreds of e-mails of the same ilk, and I’m sure not only opposition members but government members are getting this kind of advice as well. Basically, the advice is to reject this approach.

We know, in part, there’s a theory that this was introduced at the time basically as a bait-and-switch to divert people’s attention from the real issue, our tanking economy. Very clearly, that approach didn’t work out. It’s time to take off the blinders. You’ve headed down the wrong trail with this. You’ve picked the wrong time; you’ve got the wrong tax. It’s not too late. Pull back on the reins and turn these horses around.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I’ve been listening intently to all of the members and the expressions of concern from the opposition as to the situation at hand. I find it fascinating

that they would come forward with a motion that actually conflicts with the very thing they have been asking for over the last number of years that I’ve been participating. Throughout this time, they’ve been asking for the government to take on more measures for tax cuts, and they have been promoting, through our discussions, a harmonization that’s a more efficient system going forward.

Then I found it fascinating to hear the member from the NDP, who expressed some concern and said that he will support the motion. Yet, again, the third party has even considered increasing the PST as a means by which to offset some of the GST cuts that were proposed in the past.

If I put into perspective our economic situation at this time globally—we’re in this recession all around—and the impact it has on us as Ontarians and here in our local communities, it’s even more important for us to position ourselves to be more competitive in the long run. We recognize that over 130 other countries around the world have a value-added tax. We recognize also that we compete with other provinces and other states in North America. So it’s even more important for us to do something ahead of the curve.

The motion talks about the timing, and I couldn’t disagree more. The time for us to get our act together is now. Now is a time that we need strong leadership to move forward, not mixed messages from members of the opposition who have yet to come clear in terms of where they stand on this issue. We have a situation where in short order—we anticipate another year and a half or so—we can move forward and we can be in a position that’s stronger than it is now. We can only be positioned in that place of strength, so to speak, if we get some of our reform packages in place.

So let’s talk about this tax reform package that we speak of. The opposition will only talk about the notion of a harmonized tax or a single tax system. What they’re not telling the viewers and members of the media—and, of course, those that I speak to in my constituency recognize it all too well—is that we do talk in our budget about tax cuts to personal income tax and tax cuts to businesses and corporations. Why? Because we want to ensure we have a landscape that provides incentive for business investment, and ultimately job creation.

The tax reform package, when we talk about the harmonization, is important not only on the flow-through of input costs, but the fact that we’re no longer taxing our retail sales tax on top of tax. Right now, the current system is that businesses have inputs; they pay PST. Sometimes they sell to other consumers, again, with PST. So you’re taxing on tax. The flow-through on a single tax system, theoretically—and we’ve heard the argument that it will not trickle down, but it has trickled down in other provinces. The result has been lower costs, and that could be reflected to consumers.

The other part of this tax reform package being brought forward is the tax cuts—permanent, stable, sustainable tax cuts—which puts Ontario, as a jurisdiction, when it comes to personal income tax, as one of the

lowest jurisdictions in Canada. That's an incentive for business to invest as well, because they know that their employees will benefit from lower tax. The businesses themselves will have the great benefit of having lower tax by way of corporate income tax, as well as small business clawback, which will be removed. In essence, we are providing a landscape, an environment, for businesses to thrive, and providing the incentive, the stimulus, to enable those businesses to come to this jurisdiction.

We hear a lot about tax-and-spend policies that have been proposed by members of the opposition, particularly the third party, and we also hear about the opposition's proposal, which is in essence a slash-and-burn policy—neither of which is good for the times that we are in right now. We've got to take the precautions necessary to support those most vulnerable, to ensure we have sufficient funding for education and health care, at the same time ensuring that we have an environment that provides a welcome to businesses to come to Ontario.

I'm not saying this alone. Many experts agree. I can quote a few. I'll quote two.

Jack Mintz, chair of public policy for the school of public policy at the University of Calgary, says, "Sales tax harmonization will reap large benefits to the Ontario economy."

Carol Wilding, president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade: "We looked for significant tax reform. There are big bold moves in there that will make quite a significant difference. (The Ontario Budget is) very powerful from a business community perspective."

This motion talks at great length about our builders and about the real estate market. I've had ongoing discussions with some of those individuals from the home builders' association as well as Toronto BILD. I know, in speaking to my colleagues, that we recognize the great importance that industry has for Ontario. We also recognize the tremendous importance it has in creating jobs in Ontario. So we do not want to hurt the real estate industry. In fact, we're doing everything we can to try to promote and encourage greater movement in real estate.

We have to be clear that resales are exempt from PST. Seventy three per cent of homes actually sold in Ontario are by way of resale. If your home is \$4 million, you're not subject to a PST on the resale of that home. Let's be clear on that point. The point that's of contention here is the 27% of new homes that are built. But when you take into consideration that the majority of homes built in Ontario are below \$400,000, and when you couple that with the fact that all resales are not subject to tax, 97% of those homes are not subject to the HST or the tax.

I will conclude by reinforcing the fact that the tax reform package being put forward means one tax collector, which makes it more efficient and less expensive for business. It means that now you're not paying tax upon tax, but you're only paying tax at the tail end because of the flow-through of savings through the system.

Also, recall that it was the federal Conservative cousins who had been pushing hard for this harmon-

ization. They've helped, and we've allowed this thing to proceed to the extent we have because of the incentives and the funds that have been transacted in order to enable our taxpayers to benefit through this transition.

I will just end by saying that all Ontarians will benefit, in my belief, from lower personal income tax, a move to a more vibrant economy, as well as protective social services like health care and education.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to speak to the motion introduced today by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Runciman. It of course is in regard to the massive HST that was introduced by the McGuinty Liberals on March 26. Our motion today speaks to the impact that the harmonized sales tax is going to have on Ontario's housing market. We are calling upon Premier McGuinty to acknowledge that, due to the current economic downturn, this is the wrong time to move forward with his ill-advised plan to yet again increase taxes on people in this province.

1550

I've been surprised and I guess a little bit disappointed to hear the government questioning why we would bring forward an opposition day motion. The truth is, we are Her Majesty's loyal opposition. It is our job to be responsive to the people of Ontario, to question the decisions that are made by the government and to bring to its attention people's concerns and points of view. I would say that I cannot recall an issue in recent years that has generated as much negative feedback, whether by e-mail, telephone, written word, being stopped on the street or whatever, than the introduction of what many say is a dreaded, feared and hated harmonized sales tax.

For those Liberals who are questioning why we're here, we're here because we represent those who can't come to this House but who want to make sure their voices are represented. I can you that I have heard from home builders, I have heard from renovators, I have heard from realtors, I have heard from renters and I have heard from homebuyers and home sellers in the region of Waterloo who are all concerned about the impact of this harmonized sales tax on their homes.

I think it's extremely important to acknowledge that for some families this is going to make it more difficult to realize the dream of homeownership. I have recently heard from one young couple who were pretty excited and then heard about this. We've already been hit, in recent years, with skyrocketing property assessments and land transfer taxes. Regrettably, if you're now going to be buying a new home or a used home, you are going to be hit with the new Dalton sales tax, and you're going to be forced to pay more on services associated with real estate transactions such as legal fees, moving fees, real estate commissions, development charges and home inspection fees. If you decide to renovate your property, you're going to be taxed on your home renovations and on landscaping.

There was fear expressed by the building association. I say again to the Liberals who question why we're stand-

ing up, that we're standing up because the building association, the realtors and all the others in this province can't come and stand up for themselves, so we're representing their voices. We've been told that this latest tax grab could impact jobs in the residential housing industry, including the 110,000 Ontarians who are employed directly or indirectly in the real estate industry and the 368,000 people who are employed in the province's residential construction industry.

People also tell us that the economy is not doing well, and they believe this is the wrong time for the Liberal government to raise taxes yet again. They also remember that this is the second time that Dalton McGuinty has said, "I won't raise your taxes." Of course, the first time was in 2003. In the first budget, we had the largest tax increase in the history of this province when he introduced the health tax. In fact, everybody recently had the opportunity to take a look at their income tax form and see how much money they had to pay for the health tax—it would be up to and including \$900—at a time when the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. Member for Huron-Bruce, I can't hear the speaker. Thank you.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's interesting to hear the member for Huron-Bruce. Last week we had several thousand people on the lawn of Queen's Park protesting the health policies of Premier Dalton McGuinty. In their hospitals, they have seen beds closing, nurses fired from their jobs—and we had that confirmed today by ONA. We've seen outpatient services disappearing. We've seen wings of hospitals closing, emergency rooms announced for closure and, folks, hospital closings. So this government not only introduced a dreaded and hated health tax, but access to health services has deteriorated.

Today, we're talking about this particular issue, and I can tell you that the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association is concerned about the negative impacts of the harmonization of the GST and PST. They fear it will have a negative impact on new homebuyers, residential renovations and employment. So they are asking us to stand up for them.

They also fear that it will drive many renovators and some home builders to the underground economy. They're concerned about the 11,480 direct and indirect jobs in the residential construction industry which may well be at risk if there is less building taking place. So I'm going to support this motion and be speaking on behalf of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson: Merci beaucoup, madame la Présidente, pour l'occasion de participer à ce discours. Je peux dire que c'est intéressant d'écouter les députés du gouvernement parler d'une manière—comment dire ? Ils sont un peu touchés négativement par tout ce qu'on entend ces jours-ci en Ontario quand ça vient à cette

initiative d'augmenter et d'harmoniser la taxe avec la fameuse TPS fédérale.

The government will argue—and it was interesting to listen to this all the way through. They were saying that they're really, really wondering why it is that opposition members, both from the Conservatives and the New Democrats, will argue that this is the wrong time to increase taxes. I guess they really haven't noticed what's going on in the economy these days. The world is in a recession, and it seems to me that one of the things that we're trying to do—all governments that are affected—is to find a way to boost consumer spending.

One of the basic things you try to do at a time of recession is make sure that you instill confidence in the consumer so that consumer continues on buying, and so that those products that are made by your neighbours and friends are being purchased and sold through some store that hopefully somebody works at in your neighbourhood. So one of the things that all governments try to do is to instill some confidence in the consumer to do some spending.

Therefore, at a time of recession, why would a government, quite frankly, decide to increase consumer taxes? You've got to ask yourself the question. That's exactly what this initiative is doing. Oh, yes, the government stands there and says, "Oh, but this is only harmonization. This is part of a bigger tax plan. This is a way of making it easier for large corporations to get tax cuts as a result of not having to pay some taxes that they would pay now," and that somehow or other this absolves them of all wrongdoing when it comes to what it means for the average consumer on the street.

The reality is, once this tax is in place and you harmonize the PST with the GST, you will be paying more taxes on consumer items. That's the long and the short of the story. You can cut this any way you want it, but at the end it means to say that our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, along with his Liberal government, has decided in a time of recession to increase consumer taxes, at a time when it's probably least advisable to do so.

There are all kinds of examples in our current tax code that will indicate that there are a number of items on which you'd currently have to pay provincial sales tax or federal sales tax, and it's not applicable to the other. So when you harmonize the tax, a whole bunch of items that are presently exempted from the GST will have to be paid by way of consumers. How do you cut this any other way than saying that the government has decided it's going to increase taxes in a time of recession? I just think it's wrong-headed.

Listen, I understand wholeheartedly why government needs the revenue to pay for essential services such as health care and basic infrastructure in our communities. We understand that costs a better part of \$100 billion. We understand that somebody has got to pay for it. I don't think there's one member in this House who doesn't get that. But do we really want to be whacking the consumer even more, at a time when homeowners are probably most ill-affected?

For example, currently under this law, if it was to pass—and I would imagine it will; the government has a majority—you will have to pay additional taxes when purchasing a brand new house over the price of \$400,000.

1600

I listened to the government heckle across the way, both in this debate and during question period today, where they said, “Oh yeah, but here you are, the NDP is advocating for people who have big and rich houses.” My God, how much does it cost to buy a house in most places, in a lot of our communities across Ontario? You can’t go out and buy a house for \$50,000 or \$100,000 like you did 25 years ago in Toronto. In many communities across Ontario, a house for a regular family to move into is the better part of \$400,000. So this is not a tax-the-rich kind of thing. This means a lot of consumers, would-be homeowners, who currently would not have to pay taxes when purchasing a house over \$400,000 are going to have to pay those taxes.

At the end of the day, this is going to affect the working class just as much as people with money, and probably more. Sure, there are going to be people who buy houses for a million or a million and a half who will have to pay taxes, and I’m sure there are people in my party and others who say, “Well, maybe they can afford it more.” But the reality is, a whole bunch of people who are working class, who are trying really hard to build into that dream that we have here in North America of owning your own house, have no choice but to buy the house in the market they live in, and many of those houses are over \$400,000—at a time that we are the jurisdiction in North America that pays the most property taxes.

A lot of people don’t recognize that, but Ontario has the highest property taxes of any jurisdiction in North America. So couple having to pay the highest property taxes with now having to pay a tax on a house with a value above \$400,000, and we’re going to be whacking a whole bunch of consumers who can ill afford to pay it as it is now and discouraging the sale of those homes. This means to say at the other end that, yes, some families are not going to be able to own the home that they want or maybe own a home at all, but the other part of it is that they’re also not going to be able to afford to do so, which means that a whole bunch of houses that would have been constructed may not be constructed.

We saw a report today that said this is going to lead to a slowdown in the housing industry, which means to say there is less dimensional lumber sold, which affects my constituency, where it is that we can produce lumber. It means to say that less of the goods that go into houses—everything from drywall to nails to finishing trim to windows and counters and cabinets and all those things that we produce in Ontario—are going to be sold as a result of this, at a time when we’ve got a recession going on, when we’re trying to get more people to work. If this is part of the government’s plan to end this recession, I’ve got to say, “Some plan.” My God, it’s going in the wrong direction.

I agree that the government has to find ways to pay for the programs they’ve got, but I would argue that we currently have a tax regime in Ontario that provides us with about the amount of money that we need in regular times. In bad times—obviously we’re going to run a deficit this year, but so be it. That’s what happens at a time of recession. God, even George Bush understood that he had to run a deficit in good times, let alone bad. George Bush was running deficits in the United States at a time when the economy was booming.

Deficits in themselves are not a bad thing. The key thing is to be able to afford to pay them off when the times are good. That’s the situation we’re at in Ontario. Ontario is in an enviable position that when the economy is going well, we have surplus revenue, and that surplus revenue allows us to pay down our debt. When the economy gets slow, yes, then you’ve got to run yourself a deficit, but for the government to come into the House and say, “This is part of our overall plan to deal with the recession and put people back to work,” I’ve got to say to you, you’ve got some funny way of having a plan, because it’s going to do exactly the wrong thing.

The Conservative opposition has brought in this motion as a way of trying to sound the alarm bells in this Legislature, to get the government to realize that if they truly think this is a way of being able to get more people back to work, in fact it’s going to be exactly the wrong thing to do. For that reason alone I will support this particular motion, because I think they’re right. Both Andrea Horwath and Mr. Runciman have stood in this House on numerous occasions over the last couple of weeks to point out the wrongness of what this government’s trying to do with this harmonization, and I think that they should pay heed to it.

Here’s the other part of it that I think is interesting. Do you remember the name Brian Mulroney, the name Michael Wilson? Do you remember how bad those names were? It was so bad that in the subsequent election, after they introduced the GST, they dropped down to two seats in the federal House of Parliament. Who would have ever thought that the Conservative Party of Canada would drop down to two seats in the federal Parliament?

A large part of the demise of that government was because of the introduction of the hated GST. Yes, there were other things that people were upset about, but the one unifying point, that brought everybody together, was hate for the GST. People understood viscerally that they had to pay more taxes on consumer goods and they didn’t like the idea. They saw this as the government of the day—the Brian Mulroney government—and the finance minister of day, Michael Wilson, trying to shift paying taxes from the large corporations to the consumers. The average voter understood that and said, “That’s wrong. Why should we have to pay more? If I have to pay more, it means I can afford to buy less.” It probably led to not the ideal circumstances when it came to the economy of the day, and that government was defeated and brought down to two seats.

I know that government members here are starting to feel the heat. Is it to the same degree as Brian Mulroney? I don't know. But I will say to you: Heed what happened to Brian Mulroney, because this was a disaster for them as a government and brought them down to two seats.

It was interesting to listen to the tone of the debate this afternoon, because many of the members on the government side, in their defence, were quite animated in trying to explain this as being a good thing and how the opposition was wrong, and going out of their way to use language to make it look like only they understood what was good and that the public was on their side. Well, excuse me, but the public is not on your side on this.

I'm sure your brother-in-law, your mother, kids, aunts, relatives, neighbours—I'm sure some of them will support you. In bad times you'll still get their support, it doesn't matter what you do. But the average consumer in Ontario—I don't care if they live in a Liberal riding, an NDP riding or a Conservative riding—is not in favour of having consumer taxes increased. That's the long and short of it. The government can cut this any way they want. At the end, what it means to say is that we're going to pay more for consumer goods.

The other irony of this whole thing—one of the Conservative members raised this; I was hoping I'd be the first to do so, but good for her. I forget her name. Lisa—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: MacLeod.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —MacLeod raised it. Sorry, I was digressing there for a second. She said that the irony of all this is that you're going to have to pay taxes into death. It does mean that when you go out to buy and pay for a funeral—be it the casket, the funeral services, the chapel services and the rest—you're going to have to pay extra taxes to bury a loved one, or your estate will have to do so. Currently, the GST exempts that, but it's not exempted by the provincial sales tax. Once you merge the two taxes, it means you're going to have a 7% increase on all funerals. It's kind of an irony: They're going to get you coming and they're going to get you going out, and you're going to have to pay a lot more taxes at both ends of that particular equation.

I say to the government members that they should heed what the opposition has been trying to say. Don't try to couch this as some sort of economic development tool to help people get back to work, because we know very well that the worst thing to do, at the end of the day, is raise taxes on consumers during a depression or a recession. All this is, short and sweet, is a tax grab on the part of the McGuinty government. You can't cover it any other way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this motion. I think it will not come as a surprise to the members that I will be speaking against this motion, and I will state some facts as to why I'm going to be voting against this motion. We know that in a debate, emotions run high and

we say things and muddle the truth, we muddle the facts. In the time allotted to me, what I want to endeavour is to get some facts on the record, black and white.

Fact number 1: The proposed combined sales tax, the GST plus PST, does not come into force until July 1, 2010, 14 months from now. I hope that we will be out of the global economic recession by then, and that there will not be in place what is happening in the economy right now. By all economists' accounts, it seems like we are on the mend. The purpose behind having this proposed combined sales tax is to ensure that we give a competitive advantage to Ontario businesses, so that when we are out of this recession, we are better positioned to compete globally.

1610

This motion speaks to the impact on homes, on houses, the building sector in Ontario. So fact number 2 is that the proposed combined GST and PST will not apply to resale homes. I'd like to repeat that again: The combined GST and PST will not apply to resale homes. Resale homes will still remain exempt from the PST.

Fact number 3 is that it will only apply to newly built homes, but homes that are above \$500,000 in value. Any home that is \$400,000 or less will be treated exactly the way it's treated today. For any homes that are between \$400,000 and \$500,000, there will be a proportional tax applicable. And as I mentioned, \$500,000-plus homes will be taxable.

That then begs the question, what's the percentage, the magnitude of resale homes and new homes in Ontario? How many people are impacted by this proposed combined GST and PST? The majority of homes sold in Ontario today—73% of homes that are sold in Ontario today—are resale homes, and as I mentioned earlier, resale homes are not subject to the proposed combined GST and PST. In my riding of Ottawa Centre, the majority—perhaps over 73%—of the homes are resale homes. So nothing will change between how things happen today and July 1, 2010. In fact, 97% of homes that are sold in Ontario are either resale homes or new homes below \$500,000. As I mentioned earlier, things don't change; things remain essentially the same if your newly built home is less than \$500,000 or it's a resale home. So we're basically talking about 3% of new homes which are sold in Ontario. That's what we are talking about, so I wanted to get that fact out.

Fact number 5—I believe I'm at fact number 5—is that the proposed tax, the combination of the GST and PST, will operate just how the GST does, which means that the builders of homes will receive an input tax credit for everything they use to build the home. Today, what happens is that the builders of new homes get an input tax credit for all the material they use for the GST portion of it, but they don't get that for the 8% PST paid. We're talking about building equipment, we're talking about office supplies, we're talking about all kinds of construction materials—nails, bricks, cement, lumber—you name it. Every time a builder buys these products to build a house, they are paying 8% PST. And what happens

with that 8% PST? That 8% gets embedded in the cost of the house. As of July 1, 2010, the builder will get that 8% back, so the cost to build a house will come down. It should come down. We should demand from the builders that they pass on those savings to the consumers—consumers deserve it—because they will be getting the 8% PST, which they don't get back today. In the new regime, they will get that back, and they should pass the savings on to the consumer.

Fact number 6: The member from Timmins–James Bay was talking about increasing taxes. In fact, all the opposition members talked about it, but what they forget and neglect to talk about is that in this budget there are also significant personal income tax cuts and corporate income tax cuts. The opposition presents to Ontarians that somehow the government of Ontario is just harmonizing the GST and PST, but they never mention the fact that there are significant personal income tax cuts and corporate income tax cuts also in this budget to balance the impact on some goods and services where the cost will go up because of the 8%. So when we're talking about personal income tax, the fact is that if this budget is passed, Ontarians will get a tax cut worth \$10.6 billion, and that's a tax cut every year. Ontarians who make \$80,000 or less will see a 10% reduction in their taxes, not to mention the sales tax credit of up to \$260 per adult, per child, which is also a permanent sales tax credit which is embedded, and other features as well.

Similarly, corporate income tax cuts: \$4.5 billion worth. The general corporate income tax rate will be reduced from 14% to 12% and then to 10% by 2013. For small businesses, corporate income tax is being reduced by 18%. The small business deduction surtax is being eliminated.

All these features are going to assist businesses; the personal income taxes will assist Ontarians. It's important that that fact is outlined.

I firmly believe that this is a balanced budget and is a budget which will help Ontario weather this storm and come out stronger than we were before.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1617 to 1627.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number 4. All those in favour will please rise.

Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Gélinas, France

Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Prue, Michael

Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mordidi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 19; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Mr. Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Debate? Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am honoured today to lead off debate on Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, legislation aimed at bringing our mining legislation into harmony with the values of today's society while at the same time promoting a strong, vibrant and competitive mineral industry.

I'm not sure that everyone in the province realizes how important mining is to them, but this morning, average Ontarians woke up in a home fabricated with stone, steel and other materials made out of minerals mined in our province. They showered in bathrooms made out of ceramic tiles, with stainless steel fixtures made out of materials fabricated from minerals, and they brushed their teeth with toothpaste made with minerals.

Interjection: I didn't know that.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's true.

Their breakfast consisted of food raised by farmers who enriched their soil with lime, peat and fertilizers made out of minerals. The farmers' crops were planted,

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles

Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Witmer, Elizabeth

maintained and harvested with metal machines and implements made out of minerals.

They rode to work in automobiles, buses and trains made largely out of products made from minerals, everything from engine blocks to brake linings to catalytic converters, and they travelled over roads and rails made out of materials mined and quarried in Ontario.

Those who work in offices switched on computers made of components fabricated from more than 30 minerals and metals.

In hospitals, minerals help save lives and improve our health. Radioactive cobalt and iridium are used in life-saving cancer treatments, and as we know, most advanced state-of-the art medical equipment is made out of materials made from minerals.

The electricity powering homes, businesses and industries is generated by nuclear plants fuelled by uranium or metal turbines spinning in hydro generating stations.

When we want to celebrate, acknowledge and reward, we do it with items made out of Ontario-produced gold, silver, platinum and diamonds.

From the blades on the skates of boys and girls aspiring to represent Canada in ice hockey arenas around the globe to the Canadarm on the space shuttle on the frontiers of space, the products of mining are all around us. The products of mining are everywhere in everyday life: in medicine, in transportation, in electronics and in consumer goods. They enable our technologies. They are the basis of our scientific breakthroughs; they are our springboard into the future. Mining is quite simply vital to life as we know it.

I am proud of the role Ontario plays on the global mining stage, and I cannot possibly overstate the importance of the mining sector to Ontario's economy. Ontario is Canada's leading jurisdiction for the production of non-fuel minerals and a major player in the world. The province's mineral production in 2008 was valued at \$9.6 billion, with its 27 metal mines generating \$6.6 billion for the economy. Ontario led the country in exploration expenditures in 2008 with \$667 million, and despite the challenging economic times we're going through is expected to lead again in 2009.

Ontario leads Canada in the production of nickel, gold, cobalt, copper and salt, as well as cadmium, selenium and barite. Ontario is Canada's only producer of phosphate, nepheline syenite and indium. Active mining claim units reached 363,000 in 2008, exceeding 2007's record level of 308,000, which was itself a record level for the sixth year in a row. Currently, there are 41 operating mines across Ontario, including 16 base metal mines, 10 gold mines, Canada's only platinum mine, 14 industrial mineral operations and, of course we're very proud to say, Ontario's first diamond mine.

The diamond mine, De Beers Canada's Victor Mine in the James Bay lowlands about 50 kilometres west of Attawapiskat, is estimated to contribute \$6.7 billion to the Ontario economy over its projected 12-year life. The mine created 600 jobs during construction and 400 new full-time jobs when production began in July 2008.

The Toronto Stock Exchange is considered the mine financing capital of the world. In 2008, the TSX was home to 57% of the world's listed mining companies and was among the leading exchanges for mining capital raised. Toronto is also home to around 400 mining and exploration companies and 260 other mining-related companies.

Approximately 100,000 people across the province are employed directly or indirectly in the mineral industry. Furthermore, the mineral sector is the largest private sector employer of aboriginal workers in Canada.

You can understand why the mining industry is so important to the province of Ontario. May I say our government remains wholly committed to building on our industry's status as a world leader in mineral exploration and development—and that means embracing sustainability. With that in mind, we made sustainable mineral development the central theme of our province's first-ever mineral development strategy, introduced by our government. The strategy's four key initiatives are: (1) promoting long-term sustainability and global competitiveness; (2) supporting modern, safe and environmentally sound exploration and mining; (3) clarifying and modernizing mineral resource stewardship; and (4) promoting community development and opportunities for all.

One of the action items under our mineral development strategy was the modernization of the Mining Act, and that speaks to our view that our mineral wealth is both a gift and a responsibility that must be managed effectively for the benefit of all Ontarians in the future.

If passed, this legislation would revitalize Ontario's approach to mineral exploration and development. It proposes very bold steps toward making our Mining Act modern, effective and innovative through legislation that would balance all of our respective interests and benefit all Ontarians. Moreover, it will provide the clarity and the certainty that the minerals industry has been seeking. In so doing, it would ensure that an absolutely critical economic catalyst in Ontario remains strong and in a position to strengthen our communities.

It delivers on the promise made last July by Premier Dalton McGuinty when, as part of his announcement of the far north planning initiative, he called for new approaches to mineral exploration and development that would be more respectful of aboriginal communities and private landholders.

The Premier's promise presented us with a very challenging task, and I must say he set an ambitious timetable. But I want you to know that I took up the challenge with great enthusiasm and, perhaps, a little bit of trepidation as well. But I believe that we have succeeded in drafting legislation that would fulfill the Premier's promise, and we have done it by insisting upon a balanced approach that sought to reconcile all divergent views, again for the benefit of all Ontarians. This balanced approach was in my view the only way we could achieve our social and economic goals, and may I say I am very pleased with the outcome.

There are certainly many features to the act, but there are two features of the modernization process in which our ministry and I myself take particular pride.

First of all, this proposed legislation is groundbreaking in several significant areas. For instance, it would expressly incorporate aboriginal consultation in legislation and regulations. It would also introduce a requirement for completion of an awareness program to obtain a prospector's licence and it would introduce a dispute resolution mechanism for aboriginal-related issues in mining.

These provisions would make Ontario a leader in mineral resource stewardship. No other jurisdiction in Canada has such provisions.

Second, our draft legislation draws on a consultation process that was by far the most comprehensive ever undertaken by my ministry. Since launching the formal process last August, we have benefited from the input of approximately 1,000 individuals and organizations, including the minerals industry, environmental groups, municipalities and private citizens.

1640

Our proposals reflect the input of all major aboriginal organizations, with approximately 100 First Nation communities. These groups participated in workshops and community meetings across the province or presented individual submissions on issues that were of special concern to them. Let me say that it has been an honour and a privilege to engage with so many leaders and representatives of our First Nations and Metis communities and to hear them speak so passionately about matters of great concern to their people.

Some elements of this consultation process, such as the 12 community workshops hosted by the Union of Ontario Indians, were groundbreaking in themselves. Naturally, participants brought their own viewpoints and concerns to the table; we would expect that. At times, the gulf between us seemed quite wide, and on occasion it was difficult to reconcile our diversion interests. But in the end I think we grew to understand each other better. I think we gained a far better appreciation of and respect for all our different needs and aspirations, and therein lies the essence of communication. As a result, our draft legislation is much sounder, and we are all richer for the process.

I believe we have laid a solid foundation for the future, and I am very proud of that. Nor will the dialogue end with the introduction and the debate on the bill. There will be more opportunities for input as the bill moves forward. If it is passed, there will be more consultation involved as we draft regulations and begin implementation.

Interjection: Good idea.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It certainly is. On that note, I'm delighted to tell you that, through the 2009 provincial budget, our government has made a very strong commitment of \$40 million over the next three years to implement our modern Mining Act.

One of our main objectives in launching the modernization process was to ensure that mineral exploration and

development is undertaken in a way that respects the rights and interests of Ontario's aboriginal communities. First Nation communities and aboriginal organizations have certainly told us that they want meaningful and informed consultations throughout the mining sequence. Many communities also have some concerns about the way prospectors and mineral exploration companies gain access to mining lands under our current system.

At the same time, the industry places a high value on this competitive system, because it gives individual prospectors, junior exploration companies and major mining companies equal access to lands that are open for mineral staking. Although there is no automatic right to mine, this system of securing mineral tenure is also important to investors, because it provides them with the knowledge that they have the right, when a defined set of conditions is met, to move a project through the mining sequence from prospecting to extraction so they can recoup their investment. Industry has also told us that it would be a serious problem for them if they had to reveal their exploration plans before they had secured their ground through a staked claim.

In our proposed legislation, we have tried to balance these positions in a way that is fair to all and that benefits all Ontarians. For instance, our modernized approach would include provisions that would allow to us withdraw significant aboriginal cultural sites from claim-staking. It would also help us modernize the way claims are staked through the phrased introduction of map staking across the province. Notification of aboriginal communities will take place immediately after a claim is staked, and requirements for prospectors and companies to notify aboriginal communities of plans for exploration activities within their traditional lands will be part of the legislation.

In addition, the proposed legislation would introduce a graduated approach to aboriginal consultation, with the scope and degree of that consultation tied to the impact of the proposed exploration activities. Under this graduated approach, consultation and accommodation requirements would be outlined, environmental rehabilitation would be required and exploration work plans or permits would be required for activities.

To provide additional certainty for both the communities and the mineral industry, I am proud to note that Ontario would be the first Canadian jurisdiction to build a dispute resolution mechanism for aboriginal-related issues into its mining legislation and regulations. And to ensure that prospectors understand their responsibilities under these new provisions, we would require them to undergo awareness training before they get their licence.

I would also like to point out that many exploration and mining companies have already adopted best practices as part of their commitment to corporate social responsibility. What I have outlined are very significant changes. They really would address some of the key concerns we heard during our consultation process.

Another objective in modernizing the Mining Act was to mitigate the conflicts that have arisen between mineral

exploration companies and private landholders who do not hold the mineral rights on their properties. While the situation affects a small number of properties—only about 1.4% of the land in southern Ontario, for example—we do recognize that the issue has certainly been a vexing one for many, many landholders. Ontario proposes to withdraw crown-held mining rights in southern Ontario where surface rights are privately held while respecting existing claims and leases.

To address the concerns about staking during this interim period prior to the act receiving royal assent, I have ordered that these lands be withdrawn from staking. If the bill passes, then the withdrawal order would no longer be necessary as the new provisions of the act would take effect. In northern Ontario, private land holders could apply for such for such withdrawals. Ontario would consider criteria such as mineral potential before deciding whether to grant them again. Existing claims and leases would be respected.

When private land is involved as well, there would be enhanced requirements for notification as well as provisions covering the post-staking and exploration stages. Across Ontario, where there are existing claims and leases on privately owned surface rights, the proposed graduated regulatory approach would be followed. This would include enhanced notification and environmental rehabilitation requirements—a big improvement from the past. In addition, owners of patented mining lands who are not using that land for mining purposes would be able to apply for an exemption from the mining land tax. This would end a tax that has been viewed by some as unfair.

These proposed changes would address the concerns of private property owners, provide clear rules to the exploration industry and reduce the impact of mineral exploration on the environment. They would provide clarity and certainty to the mineral industry and to communities and areas of mineral exploration activity.

Our proposed legislation also responds to calls for greater consideration for the environment. It would reduce impacts to the environment by including remediation requirements in our new graduated regulatory approach to exploration activities. It would embed in legislation the provision that no new mine opening can occur in the far north unless there is an approved community-based land-use plan. The implementation of map staking—a modern commuter-based system that doesn't require stakers to enter or disturb the surface of the land—would reduce the already low impact of ground staking.

Those are certainly some of the highlights of our modernized approach. I firmly believe that it sets a framework that supports significant strides in aboriginal consultation. At the same time, it steers a wise and a prudent course that balances all our social and economic interests. I do acknowledge that in the short term these changes may require some adjustments, but I feel strongly that in the long term our proposals would strengthen the industry and provide new opportunities for growth, particularly in our northern, rural and aboriginal com-

munities. Certainly, we cannot forget the importance of economic development to First Nations and Métis communities. They have told us very, very clearly that they want to see meaningful employment and business development for aboriginal people in mining, forestry and other natural resource-based industries. Our proposals would help ensure that aboriginal peoples participate more fully in mineral sector activities in their territories.

Working in conjunction with other government initiatives, such as the \$30 million that has initially been set aside for resource benefit sharing, our proposed legislation would foster partnerships in development, promoting prosperity for aboriginal communities and Ontario as a whole.

Resource benefit sharing is about including aboriginal communities province-wide in the many benefits of natural resource development in Ontario. It also means promoting skills training, job creation, and economic spin-offs for aboriginal communities, as well as encouraging business partnerships between those communities and natural resource companies.

1650

I'd like to point out that many exploration and mining companies are, on their own initiative, already forming productive partnerships. Right now, there are more than 50 agreements currently in place between First Nations communities and industry.

The fact is that we set out to create a modern Mining Act that would promote balanced development that benefits all Ontarians, while modernizing the way that mining companies stake and explore their claims. At the same time, we wanted our legislation to continue supporting a vibrant Ontario minerals industry that would help our communities realize their economic and social aspirations. I believe that our proposals succeed in meeting those objectives.

If passed, our modernized Mining Act would help us ensure that Ontario remains one of the best places in the world to live, to work and raise a family, as well as for mineral exploration and mining investment.

I want to conclude my remarks today by expressing my view that, for all intents and purposes, the Mining Act is truly a living document. We all know that the Mining Act must reflect changes in the mining industry and the expectations of society. Mining and societies are nothing if not dynamic. Globalization, technological advances and stakeholder expectations are dictating a permanent state of redefinition and rising expectations for the mining sector in Ontario and around the world. As the industry is redefined, so too must be the legislation governing it.

Our commitment to modernize the Mining Act is rooted in policy objectives that foster a business climate that promotes sustainable economic development and community engagement, objectives in keeping with the goal set out in Ontario's first-ever mineral development strategy.

The bottom line is that mining will continue to be one of Ontario's economic pillars. As nations around the

world advance, the need for minerals will increase. Ontario will continue to be a global supplier of many different minerals. The question is not whether or not mining will be done in Ontario, but how it will be done. This updated Mining Act will define how it is done to reflect the realities and the expectations of Ontarians in the 21st century.

By getting the Mining Act right—and we know how important that is—we can ensure that Ontario remains one of the best places in the world for mineral exploration and mining investment. We have the opportunity to advance legislation that continues to promote sustainable development in a way that respects the environment, communities and individuals.

I would like to close by thanking the many people who have been involved in modernizing the Mining Act for their ongoing commitment and contributions to advancing legislation that is so fundamentally important to Ontario's prosperity: certainly, members of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, who worked very, very hard; all the communities that have participated; and may I say all those who have also felt free to share their thoughts as we introduced the legislation last week. We appreciate the support, but we also are looking forward to the full debate and any concerns that come forward. The fact is that this has been a remarkable process. I'm very proud to say that we look forward to the debate and we believe that we have achieved our goal of finding the balance that's needed to modernize the Mining Act in a way that will give us opportunities that we know are so important for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It was interesting to listen to the minister. I know the minister is very committed to mining; I'm not sure his party is.

The importance of mining to Ontario: As the minister pointed out, it's not only important today; it goes back to our very beginning. Ontario has had a huge mining industry, and of course a lot of that mining industry developed with the development of CP Rail, the first rail line that went across northern Ontario and opened up the north and made it available. As they were blasting through the rock, the rail company of course had geologists with them, and they were finding considerable amounts of valuable materials and minerals.

The minister pointed out that Ontario does lead in gold production, silver production, palladium, salt, copper. He didn't mention that uranium, which we used to lead in; we don't lead in it anymore. He didn't mention nickel, of course, which was one of Ontario's hugest productions at one time. I believe Thompson, Manitoba, and soon Labrador will be outproducing Ontario by a significant amount, which is too bad. We could have had more production in Ontario if we had had a more benevolent way in which the mining companies could extract these minerals from the ground.

This Mining Amendment Act is long overdue. Hopefully, when we have a look at the act and when we see

the regulations that will come with it, it will lead to a more vibrant mining industry. I have my doubts, because I think this bill is going to put more red tape in the way of mining companies as opposed to solving their problems.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I listened intently to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and what he had to say. We got a bit of a geology lesson here and a bit of a mineral lesson in terms of the kinds of things that each of us uses every day. There is no doubt that much of what we use is mined, and there is no doubt that, through the smelting process and everything else, we have built a mighty and a wonderful society based on what we have taken out of the ground.

There is no question in my mind, and the minister is right: The Mining Act is ancient. The Mining Act is as old as Confederation, or darn near it, and it was time that it be updated. But I have to question, and perhaps my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, who is our expert on this field—mining seems to have been booming. Notwithstanding the fact that we had an ancient act, mining has been booming across all of Ontario. Every time that I speak with the miners or meet the miners, they're talking about how the cost of the commodities keeps going up. The profits being made by the mining companies are huge. When I go to Sudbury and talk to Inco and to its predecessor, everything seems to be going—or at least was going—fairly well under old legislation.

The problem, as I see it, with the Mining Act isn't about the mining itself, but it's about the problems related to staking. It's about the problems of people going out and doing the surveys and looking at the land, and the way that it impedes on private property and the ownership of private property, especially when it relates to First Nations.

Now, I didn't hear the minister talk a great deal about First Nations, but for me, the nub of it comes down to the First Nations. Are they going to accept this bill? Are they going to be protected, particularly north of the 51st parallel? I think that is the whole debate and what I need and others need to hear as this bill fans out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I too—

Interjection: You were a little slow, Mike.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Maybe my enthusiasm got ahead of me. But I listened with great interest to the presentation by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I know the operative phrase is to “modernize” the Mining Act, and I do stress that it's very, very important to realize that we can learn from the past.

My family has been involved in gold mining, and when I say that, I guess I'm going back 160 years ago. My great-great-grandfather saw three of his brothers leave Port Dover, get down to New York City, catch a

boat to Panama, buy horses—across the isthmus, up the California coast to San Francisco to be there for the 1849 gold rush. Two of the brothers at that time did very, very well. A couple of their sons did very, very well. They have the claims. We have the family claims.

I was out there this past summer. I had an opportunity to go in one of the tunnels; we pulled out quartzite. I brought some quartzite back. I've got it sitting on my fireplace. That would be my great-great uncle. Tunnels all through the California Sierras—this is in the Yosemite area. Some of the family—the one brother, Henry, California Harry, was also in the Okanagan. There was a Kimberley goldfield just north of there, and much of the business there was mule teams to bring supplies up there. We can learn an awful lot from what was done 100 and 150 years ago. We can modernize this, but we have to respect the knowledge and wisdom of those miners and the very hard work—I know that in my family the work continues in the goldfields in California.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

1700

Mr. Mike Colle: It's clear that the minister is very committed to mining and the impacts that mining has, positive and negative—obviously mostly positive—on the people of Ontario and especially the First Nations people. He went on at length about the incredible dialogue they've had with the Union of Ontario Indians and all these incredible First Nations groups; they've been consulting since last August. I think the consensus is that they have come up with a very good framework for a piece of legislation that has been waiting in queue for 100 years.

The minister also pointed out how important mining and mineral extraction is, not only to northern Ontario but to the economy of Ontario in general—certainly the connection with Bay Street and all the mining entrepreneurs who have been here in Toronto for decades and decades as motivators of the capitalization of Ontario's minerals. It's a very important industry, and I think that those of us who live south of the 401 sometimes forget how important it is that an industry like mining thrives.

In this global economy, as he said, it's critically important to understand where Ontario stands, and where Ontario's future will be, because the demand for minerals—and Canada and Ontario are rich in minerals—will be something that will sustain us for generations to come. What we do to mining is critically important for Ontario's economic future, and I think that Ontario looks to have a bright future—no pun intended—with the diamonds in Attawapiskat. It's something that is crucial for Ontario's economic future and the economic development of all of Ontario, especially the northern part.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to truly thank the members for Halton, Beaches—East York, Haldimand—Norfolk and Eglinton—Lawrence for their comments, and

particularly the members for Halton, Haldimand—Norfolk and Eglinton—Lawrence for their support for the legislation and for the efforts we are making to find a true balance for the mining sector that actually allows us to maintain a vibrant, positive investment climate for mining while at the same time being more respectful of our aboriginal communities, our partners and other people who are involved in this process. I must say that the wisdom and knowledge the member from Haldimand—Norfolk asked me to take into consideration—we have listened to so many people during the consultation process, and I respect that. As for the member from Beaches—East York, I appreciate your comments.

Certainly there is no question that the support we've received from the aboriginal community has been most impressive. Last week, Grand Chief John Beaucage, leader of the Anishinabek Nation/Union of Ontario Indians was by my side acknowledging what an important process we had gone through in terms of the consultation process, and he was very supportive, as was Ontario regional Chief Angus Toulouse, again recognizing this was virtually an unprecedented process. May I say that the fact we are recognizing aboriginal and treaty rights in the preamble and the purpose statement of the legislation itself is also something that has never happened before, in terms of our legislation in this province, so the support is there.

There's no question that there will be much more discussion, much more work to be done, but again, the goal is clear, and I think we've achieved that goal, which is to find that balance between maintaining a positive investment climate and finding a more respectful relationship in terms of our aboriginal communities. I look forward to further debate of this very important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You may not be applauding when I'm done. Let's start off and do business here. Our friend page Cameron is bringing me two—this is a two-glass speech, so you're in for it.

First of all, let me just pick up on what the minister said in closing. He said that he went through this consultation process and how wonderful it was, and at the end of the day, he achieved balance and got consensus. Nothing could be further from the truth. You know that as well as I do.

What was really telling at the press conference on Thursday of last week was who was not there. Yes, Angus Toulouse was there and Mr. Beaucage was there; no question. But people such as the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, the people who are most affected by this legislation—because this legislation speaks to the far north, which is all of NAN territory—were not there. In fact, Grand Chief Stan Beardy was pretty clear in his displeasure about what this legislation didn't do and put out a press release on Thursday saying that this thing stops short of what they've asked for, and that was the issue of

consent. So let's not say that we got a balance, because we didn't get a balance.

Is this a step forward? Yes, it is. I don't disagree. There is an attempt in here to try to deal with the real issue, which is how to make sure that First Nations are not left aside when there is a mining project on their traditional territories. Yes, there is going to be a process under this legislation whereby everybody, from the prospecting community to the operators of the mines themselves, will have to have a form of consultation with the First Nations. But at no point in that consultation process will there be an absolute right of the First Nations to say yes or no to the project—and that's what they were asking for. So let's not say that this is a great victory for First Nations. There are a lot of First Nations—I know, because I called a number of them as of Thursday, and I've had a number of them call me back. As you know, I've been pretty active on this particular file for years. So I have to say to the minister, up front, that it doesn't really deal with the core issue of being able to say yes or no to a project.

I find this an odd spot to be in, because I've been advocating for years in this Legislature that we move in this direction.

I was the member who brought in, if you remember—I don't know if you were here at the time—the very first motions and bills on the issue of revenue sharing. What I was trying to get at in those bills was that we need to get away from the practice we've had in the past of saying that First Nations should be sort of like innocent bystanders when it comes to any development that happens in mining on their territories. The reason I had done that—and I've got to tell the story—is I could see that in the future there would be far too many problems trying to get projects forward because more and more First Nations are demanding what they should have demanded a long time ago, and we would have more and more conflict as a result of mining intruding on to their territories if we didn't have some mechanism to deal with two things: One was revenue sharing, which I'll get into later, and the other was land use planning.

I say to the government across the way, the bill achieves neither of those points. It brings you part of the way toward giving First Nations the right to be consulted, to be informed of what is going to happen on their traditional territories—that's a step forward; I'm not going to say that's bad, because that's something I would have put in a bill—but it doesn't deal with the final issue, which is being able to get revenue out of a project in their traditional territory, as I would in a municipality such as Timmins or Sudbury or Red Lake. A municipality automatically has a right to revenue from those projects if they're in their boundaries. That's called municipal taxation. The citizens of those communities automatically have a right to those jobs because of their vicinity to the project. With First Nations, it's not as clear, because if a mine is established on their traditional territories, there's absolutely no right to revenue, even in this legislation, or what's currently on the books in the legislation of On-

tario—and there's been no ability to even be informed that there was going to be exploration on their territories. So the legislation deals with the informed position, but it doesn't deal with the issue of consent.

So I've got to say to the government that if your stated goal was that you wanted to provide First Nations with the assurance that if a project went forward, (a) they would be informed; (b) they would be in the driver's seat when it came to helping shape what good land use policy should be; (c) they would have an ability to identify jobs that their citizens are able to get from their home communities—and the last part, which is revenue sharing—then you've not hit that goal.

On the flip side, what industry is looking for is certainty. You understand, Minister, because you spoke about it in your speech. If you're going to go out and compete in the world for money to invest in mining—you want to invest in a jurisdiction that has clear rules, that says, "Here's what's expected of you if you're going to come in and explore in Ontario. If you're going to bring a mine into production, these are the rules, A to Z," and it's a clear enough process so that everybody knows the game.

1710

The big problem we have today is that there are some good rules around mining in Ontario. That's why we're the premier area for investment across the world. Ontario is the strongest place of those mining jurisdictions around the world because we do have expertise and we do have some good laws. Where there is a lot of grey right now is around the First Nations side, because, number one, 15 or 20 years ago—I would argue more than 20 years ago—there wasn't a huge amount of activity going on when it came to exploration in the far north; and number two, a lot of communities were not very organized towards trying to get revenue sharing and trying to get land use planning as far as how it would impact on our communities. So that's where we are at. We want to move forward with projects and we want to make sure that First Nations have a say in these particular projects.

Where are we with this legislation? I want to say up front that I find myself a bit torn. Is this legislation bad? No. Is this legislation better than what we have? To a degree. But does it get to us to where we've got to go? I think the answer is no.

I'm going to skip right to what I would normally say at the end of a debate, and that is, the section of the bill where the government reserves the right in the far north. Simply put, this legislation says that after you've done the exploration and you decide as a mining company that you want to bring a project online, and you want to bring a mine into production the First Nation must be consulted. There's going to be a process that will be determined by regulation as to how you bring First Nations in so that they're involved in the land use planning around what's going to happen at that mine, and hopefully within that process, identify potential for employment and for economic activity for First Nations. The First

Nations, by way of this legislation, if it is passed, would have that right, and I think that's a good thing.

The problem is the permission section of the law, under part XIV, section 204, of the bill. There is a section in there, under "Permission," which basically says, without reading the whole thing, that if cabinet feels that it's to the economic or social interest of Ontario to go ahead with the project and not finish the consultation with the First Nation, presumably because they're not going as fast as they should, the cabinet can override that section of the legislation. That's what's got First Nations quite concerned.

The minister is a colleague of mine and I respect him. I don't think he would end up using this section; I certainly hope he wouldn't. I don't think I would either, but who's to say whether a future Minister of Mines in Ontario, or a future Premier and cabinet, would decide that they're not as interested in trying to find ways to bring First Nations into the process; or not as engaged as I have been on this side of the House, along with Howard Hampton and yourselves, and that they would not use that section of the bill to usurp the rights of First Nations? Nobody in this House can tell me that that can't happen. So it begs the question, why is it there?

I understand why it's there by reading the legislation. It's a bit of an assurance to the mining industry, saying, "Listen, in the end, if the process is so long and so onerous and very difficult to go through, and the First Nations are really not co-operating, we've got something for you. The cabinet can act on your behalf." I would say that that is a bad thing, because that will bring uncertainty to investment in Ontario.

You know as well as I do, Colin Seeley, from Placer Dome—I was there when we negotiated the impact benefit agreements back in the early 1990s with Placer Dome for the Musselwhite project—and Jim Gowans at De Beers—I was there as we negotiated the IBA agreements with Attawapiskat—had a commitment as corporations. They said, "We're not going forward unless we get an agreement." And De Beers, to their credit, said at the very beginning of the Attawapiskat process—and that was some seven or eight years ago, I can't remember now; it may be as much as nine years ago—"We will not go forward unless the community ratifies an agreement," period. They understood as a mining company that if you don't have that, at the end of the day you will have a problem trying to bring future projects online with First Nations in that vicinity, and it will be very hard for them to work with First Nations on an existing project.

So I think the legislation has got to be clear. I think that particular section has got to come out. I think most—I would say the majority of the mining industry out there, De Beers, Placer Dome and others—understand the concept of bringing First Nations online. They've done it before. They know it's expensive and they know it takes some time. But they understand, from their perspective as a business, if you don't have the First Nations on side as willing partners and happy with the process and the outcome, it's going to be far more costly for them in the

long run should they bring that project online through work stoppages that could potentially happen because a First Nation says, "I'm not happy with what's happened here." You will constantly be in a situation of having blockades on roads and having disruptions in production because the First Nation is not onside.

You can't blame them. For some of you who've had the opportunity—I know some of you have come up with me to James Bay and a number of you have travelled there on your own. You're talking about very isolated and very poor communities—small communities of 400 to 2,000—who have no economic activity happening there whatsoever other than the school, maybe the hospital and the band office. That's about the only employment you can get. You can understand why First Nations are saying, "We need to have some ability to ensure, certainly to God, if there's going to be a mine that's established in our territory, that we are able to benefit from it."

What's happening today is that the First Nations are getting much more refined about learning how to negotiate those IBA agreements and much more demanding as far as what they want back from those projects. So if we go forward with legislation that gives cabinet wiggle room and the ability to override the principle of negotiations that have to happen to get an IBA, I think at the end of the day it's going to create more uncertainty and that's not what the mining industry needs.

I'll repeat something that Michael Prue, the member for Beaches–East York, said earlier because I think it needs to be said. Part of the sale on this bill is that the government is saying, "We've got a Mining Act that dates back to 1873, when the Mining Act was first brought in. It's old and we've got to make it better."

Well, let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Ontario has found a whole bunch of mines over 100 years now and we're still bringing new mines into production with the existing act. So it's not like this act has to be gotten rid of because we're holding up mining production in Ontario.

You know as well as I do that we started up the first diamond mine in Ontario under De Beers under current act because the company said they would not go forward unless they had an agreement with First Nations. We've got Lake Shore Gold Corp. and others that are opening gold mines in my riding. St. Andrew is looking to reopen. Detour Lake Mine is in the process of permitting in order to go into advanced feasibility on that particular project. So we have all kinds of projects across Ontario that are going into production under the current act.

My point is, how much of a rush should we be in to pass this legislation? And should the government have said, "Listen, we don't have an agreement, so either we go forward and continue negotiations to get an agreement, so that we can bring in legislation," or do they decide to go ahead?

I advised the minister and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs way back on this whole process. I said, "Take your time. Do not go through this in a huge hurry and don't come out of it without getting what it is that is

going to get us what we need in the end,” because at the end of the day what are we getting? We’re still going to have some confusion and we’re still going to have First Nations that are going to be offside, and I don’t think that’s to the benefit of any of us here in Ontario or northern Ontario, quite frankly.

I say to the government, I give you some credit for moving the stick forward. I’m not going to stand here as the critic and say this is awful. I’d be disingenuous myself because some of the stuff that’s in here is stuff that I would have put in my own bill if I had been the Minister of Mines. So I say to the minister, job well done for some of the stuff that’s in here.

The requirement of having to have an agreement on the various stages of mining from the exploration end of it to actually putting the mine into production and having First Nations go through a process of negotiations is a good idea. It’s a good thing. It’s something I would have done. But the problem is, you have not, in the end, given First Nations the comfort they need in being able to say, “Whoa a second here. We’re not happy with the plan to come in that the company has. We want some modifications to it. We don’t feel that we have enough economic benefit from the project.” In the end, they will still be in a position of having cabinet decide for them what is good or isn’t good.

I say it’s a very, very different thing for First Nations, and we need to get that right. One of the amendments I’ll be thinking about bringing in—and I’ll tell you now—is one that basically strikes that particular section.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, hang on. I’m getting to that. I’ve got this all in order, so I will be there, Minister.

One of the things I’m saying to the minister now is that it’s going to be interesting to see what others have to say about the permission clause in this bill. It’ll be interesting to see what not only First Nations but others in the environmental movement and the mining community have to say about that particular section because I don’t believe it gives clarity.

1720

As I said, the government is going to have a process whereby, at every stage of mining, from exploration to advanced exploration to advanced feasibility studies and actual production, First Nations will have to be at the table with the mining company, and presumably the province, at one point, in order to go through a process to get an agreement, and if no agreement is had, there will be dispute resolution in this bill as well, and I can understand the logic for doing that.

Part of the problem—and this is what I talked about to your staff earlier when they came to brief us on this today, and I hope you got the word back from Bruce and others, because I have great respect for the people in your ministry—is that much of the detail about, first of all, what the process of negotiation is going to look like, the consultation, and the dispute resolution is going to be left up to regulation. So it’s a little bit of a blind man’s bluff. I don’t know, as a legislator, in the end, if what you’re

going to put into regulation is actually going to do what will make people comfortable within the mining industry and within the First Nations community, because it’s really a pig in a poke.

I talked to Bruce earlier today, and the sense I have is that the regulations are not going to be done until sometime in late 2009, and we’re expecting this legislation to pass third reading in the fall of 2009. So the legislation will be passed without our understanding and knowing what is in the regulation. One of the things the minister has to consider is having something that allows us to determine what the regulations will look like. I don’t think the committee needs to write your regs, but the principles of what needs to be in the regs have to be clearly understood before we get to third reading and before we vote for this thing at third reading, because without that, it’s going to be very hard to tell. We may very well end up with a really good piece of legislation that deals with the right of First Nations to be consulted on mining activities in their territory and, if it doesn’t work, having a dispute resolution mechanism, but both those things may not work well, depending how they’re drafted in the regulation.

I don’t want to assume that you, Minister, have an agenda where you’re trying to play the First Nations off. I don’t buy that for a second. I know you too well for that. You’re an honourable member. But it is part of the concern. And the bigger problem is—and I want you to think about this—you may end up, and this is the argument for putting it in the legislation, drafting regulations that suit the needs and the support of First Nations, myself and others, but what’s to stop a future cabinet from changing the regulation if they don’t like it? That’s the problem. It may very well be that you have great intentions to do the right thing, and let’s say I’m the next Minister of Mines and I want to do the right thing. But what happens down the road if somebody comes into the ministry and you get a Premier and a cabinet that is hostile towards First Nations? You know as well as I do that that can happen. We have a long history of hostility of provincial and federal governments towards First Nations, where they decide by right of cabinet to make a change to a regulation that would, quite frankly, foist something upon First Nations and the mining community that they may not want.

That’s why some of this stuff really has to be spelled out in the legislation, so that at least the cabinet of the future has to walk into this Legislature and stand before the House and before the people of Ontario to say, “Here’s what we are going to do,” in the open and have an opportunity for legislators to have a go at it.

From the First Nations perspective, you’ll understand, Minister, because you have been involved in the process for a while, as a northern member and somebody who represents First Nations but also as a minister who has been working with the First Nations on this issue—you understand as well as I that there’s a huge amount of misgiving and mistrust on the part of many people in First Nations towards provincial and federal governments

because of what has happened in the past. Some of that may be right or wrong, but that's the way they feel.

When the leaders of today in the First Nations community go to sell this—let's say that you get an agreement, and Stan Beardy and Stan Louttit and others go into their communities and they start to sell this. There are going to be a bunch of naysayers in the community—you know as well as I do; you listen to the Wawatay radio talk-in as I do, and if you understand Cree or Ojibway, you'd hear—there are going to be a lot of people saying, "This legislation doesn't spell out our rights as First Nations." Yes, there is a section in the law that recognizes the aboriginal rights of self-governance inside this legislation and that the rights under the Constitution have to be respected. It's there. I acknowledge it; I see it. But the other clauses, without having it properly spelled out in the legislation what the intent is, and that permission clause, are going to give a lot of people discomfort when it comes to giving this thing the type of support it should get. So I'm not clear in my mind that we've actually met the stated goal, but it is a step in the right direction.

As I said, I find myself torn because I want to support this, but I'm very much afraid I'm not going to be able to at this point unless we get some of these amendments. I still have to talk to a number of people within the communities that I represent in the mining industry, the First Nations and others before I come back with it, because the bill was just introduced on Thursday and here we are, on Monday, having this debate. I wish we would have had a little bit more time so that we would have been able to do a better job of preparing for this in the Legislature today.

I just want to point out one thing that I raised with your staff today, and it's something that we need to think about: These new rights that First Nations will have when it comes to being consulted on the various steps in the process will apply only after the bill is passed. So if somebody is now in the process of advanced exploration, we need to clearly understand what rules they're going to fall under. My understanding of the way it's going to work is that if you're currently in the process of bringing a mine to production, and you're doing that under the current act, the rules that you started out with are going to be the rules that'll apply to you as you go into production. So if you've got your mine closure plan done, you will fall under this legislation that we currently have, and only after the passage of this legislation—royal assent—will the new rules apply to new projects, not those that have already been approved under previous projects. I think we've got to give that a little bit of thought. You probably have thought about it a bit. I would imagine you've had this discussion with your officials, but what we need to do is make sure that we don't send a signal of uncertainty to industry when it comes to those that are currently in the process. I think we're going to have to give that a little bit of thought.

Let me get to the other part here, the issue of subsurface rights. This is a different issue around this bill. One of the things this bill does is try to address an issue

that has been a real issue, especially for those people living south of the French River. About 2% of the land south of the French River is private land to which the crown owns the mineral rights. So there's been an issue, a real issue, on the part of some exploration companies that decide there's a claim that they'd like to stake. They go on the person's land, they don't get the permission, and they stake the claim. In some cases, they do a bit of exploration and the property owner finds out that somebody has been mucking around on their land and there's been no permission. The government's response to this is to say, "We're going to withdraw all of those private lands in southern Ontario that don't own the mineral rights from the ability to be explored." Again, that's 2% of the land mass.

Two points: One is, you know as well as I do that in the exploration business, you need as much land as possible to be open to staking so that you have a better chance of finding a mine. If the issue is people who were not getting permission to get access to the land, maybe what we need to have in the legislation is a process by which permission could be sought. At the end of the day, if the private landowner says, "No, I don't want you here," make that the decision of the private landowner. But for those people who say, "You know what? Maybe I do want to get into an agreement with a mining exploration company that thinks there may be some form of mineral potential under my property," they won't have to go running back to the Ministry of Mines to take back out of the system land to be explored. Because my understanding is, you're going to be able to apply through a process—that the land that's taken out of circulation will be able to be brought back in if there's an application made, that the minister may put it back into circulation again. That's my understanding.

So I think it's a bit of an odd situation, and it seems to me that what we could have done is had legislation that says that a private property owner who doesn't own mineral rights will have the right, just as a First Nation would have the right, to either agree or not agree that a project goes forward. If the property owner says yes, then you go through the necessary process of land use planning—which means to say, neighbours and all that have to be consulted etc.—and then the mine goes forward. If not, it doesn't go forward if the property owner doesn't want it to.

But here's the really interesting part: The government has a different rule for northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, I believe less than 1% of land is private property, where an individual or a company owns it, but there's no subsurface right. The crown has the subsurface rights—in other words, the mining rights, as they're commonly known. The difference in northern Ontario is, those lands will not be taken out of circulation and removed from staking. They will stay within the ability to be staked, but it will be the right of the property owner to ask for it to be taken away.

1730

I say to the minister: Be careful setting up legislation where, depending on where you live, you have different

treatment under the law—where northerners get one treatment and the southerners get the other. You know that game. I look at your colleague the member from Algoma-Manitoulin; we understand how northerners feel about that in the first place. I think that is a bit of a dangerous road for you to go down, both politically and legislatively.

I think the right approach—and again, I want to hear people at committee speak to this. If I'm wrong, come and tell me. I'm sure Mr. Brown will tell me I'm wrong. I'll accept that right now. You're probably—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, that's what I figured.

Anyway, I want to hear from property owners and others: Would it have been better to say, "Never mind; we'll treat all private property owners in the province the same"? First of all, the rule would be that if you own property but you don't have the subsurface rights and somebody wants to go out and stake, it can be done with your permission. In other words, the property owner would be the one to decide. If the property owner says no, so be it. If the company wants to try to buy the person out for a larger price, maybe that will be an enticement to get permission, but it becomes the permission of the property owner.

The biggest thing is that the rule would be the same for southern Ontario as it is for northern Ontario. Having a dual system where the northern subsurface rights are treated differently than those of southerners is not a good thing for us to be doing and, at the end, is a bit of a divisive issue for us in northern Ontario, because most people will not understand this in detail, as we do. All they'll see it as the north being treated differently than the south, and I don't think the government should be going down that road.

It will be interesting to hear what people have to say when they come into committee, so that we have a process where we can say, should the legislation stay the way it is, or should we have one treatment for north and one for south and a proper system by which to give the property owners some say about whether development happens or doesn't happen on their property?

The other thing is—and I know this is a bit of a stretch, but I want to give you the scenario. I might be wrong on this one; I'm perfectly willing to admit that I might be wrong sometimes. One of the things that occurred to me is that in southern Ontario, we have salt mining, and there is potential for mining in southern Ontario in different places. It just happens to be that most of the exploration is done in the north because there's a better potential for finding minerals in northern Ontario than there is in the geology of the south, because of the formation of the rock. That's not to say that there's no potential whatsoever in southern Ontario.

One thing I'm curious about is if, let's say, a mining explorationist were to find some sort of mineral potential somewhere in northern Ontario under private property, does that mean that they will never be able to develop that property? That's my read of the legislation—unless

there's an exemption. I don't know if there's an exemption the other way. All I'm saying is that there may be times where people will want mining activities to happen in their area because of the economic benefit that a mine might bring to the community. For example, where I come from in Timmins and where my colleague Madame Gélinas comes from in Sudbury, if it wasn't for mining, a big part of our life and our community would be non-existent. We understand that mining nowadays, in the year 2009, is much more sustainable, safe and environmentally conscious than it was even when I started working in the 1970s.

The minister may know—actually, you do know because you were there—that my cottage is out on Kamiskotia Lake, which is the worst example of what not to do when mining. You will know the story well because your ministry, with you as minister and your predecessors, dating back to when I was at the ministry, has been putting money in to do reclamation on that mine site, because it is the worst environmental disaster that we've seen in the province probably in the history of mining.

Just for members to know, the story was that during the war in the 1940s, the Canadian government needed to have copper, and this particular mine had an ability to get copper. So they fast-tracked the permit and allowed it to go into production without going through the due process of making sure they had proper tailings dams constructed etc. The mine operated up until the 1950s. You crush the rock, you get the rock from underground, you skip it up to the surface, you crush it, you put chemicals in it and eventually you get the copper. What's left is normally discharged into a tailings pond, and it's treated and contained. What they did in this particular one was they just allowed it to jump over the side, as they would say. As a result, an entire area was polluted. And how much money have we spent there trying to fix that now? Forty five million dollars—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's more, eh? We, as taxpayers, through the mine reclamation fund, have had to spend over \$45 million—I forget what the exact number is—in order to rehabilitate that site. That's a really good story. It's an excellent story about how we, as a province, got it right in the early 1990s by putting in place the mine reclamation act that allowed mine closure plans to be put in place to ensure mines don't do that in the future.

In fact, if you look at all projects that have happened since the early 1990s, we see quite a different story when it comes to how they impact the environment. In a place like Timmins, Lake Shore Gold, which is now building a mine just south of Timmins by the 144—you wouldn't even know there's a mine there unless you drove into the bush and saw the headframe. If they ever did build a mill there, it would be like everything else that we see now: There would be a footprint on the ground that would have some effect on the environment, no doubt, but the effect would be pretty minimal.

To prove this, I invite people to take a look at what happened at Detour Lake. Detour Lake came into pro-

duction in 1983 or 1984. It was a huge mine that ran up there for about 15 years. It was closed under the mine closure plan. I invite people to get on a plane and fly over that mine and see if you can find it. You wouldn't even know it was there. The entire site has been rehabilitated. The tailings, the mine structure—everything has been taken down. The hydro lines were taken down. Ironically, now they're going back. That's good news. But the story is, we've actually done a pretty good job. When people come to my office from the environmental community and others and say, "Oh, God, you've got to hate mining. It's terrible," I say, "Hey, come and take a look at Detour Lake." Was it terrible? Damned right, it was terrible. Take a look at the Kamiskotia mine, and take a look at the Matachewan project, the old Hollinger project, the old McIntyre mine. Those were some pretty bad examples of what not to do. But with the regulations that we have today and the legislation such as the mine reclamation act mining is a much safer place to operate.

My point, as it relates to this legislation, is that the First Nations will have a right to be consulted on that whole process of mine reclamation, which I think is an important step. But in the end, it's an interesting part of the debate.

Succinctly put, subsurface rights for private owners: I think we need to look at that again. Maybe there's another way of fixing this so that everybody is treated the same.

The other part is map staking. Boy, oh, boy, you're going to get my dander up with that one. We know the politics of this, Minister. You and I have been around northern Ontario, along with your colleague, long enough to know that prospecting is almost a way of life. It's in the blood of many people in northern Ontario. So people understand what we're talking about when we talk about map staking. Currently, if you want to go out and stake a claim, you've physically got to go in the bush. If you decide that you want to be an explorationist, you will hire a prospector or you will be a prospector yourself, you'll go into the bush, you'll delineate your claim by staking it physically, and then you'll go to the mine recorder's office and record the claim. And then all of the work that happens after that is subsequent to that staking activity happening. That means you've got to hire somebody to do it for you, you've got to do it yourself, you've got to get line cutters, you've got to get other people in the bush to physically do the staking work that needs to be done. Often, the job goes to First Nations people. I know in your riding, as in mine, that's the way of life of many First Nations people. They go work for a mine exploration outfit and they do staking on behalf of the mining company. We are now saying we're going to get rid of that and we're going to go to map staking, which means that you will only have to go look at a map and say, "Isn't that an interesting spot? I will register that as a claim to me." The problem is this: Who's got the money and the pockets deep enough to lock up how much land? If you don't have to physically go in the bush and hire somebody to go in, the staking is going to be done by

somebody sitting here on Bay Street who's going to be looking at a map and geological information, and they're going to start deciding what it is that they're going to lock up as far as land that they can stake for themselves. The potential is that you could end up having large tracts of land taken out of circulation from all other mining explorationists and be tied up by a couple of mining companies.

A lot of this is left to the detail of regulation. I spoke to your officials today, and they said, "Don't worry. We're going to cover that off in regulation." Well, okay. I want to see them regulations. Before we sign on the dotted line here on the third reading, we need to know how you're going to deal with map staking, because you could potentially end up in a situation where a couple of companies have deep pockets and have the will to wait it out and say, "That's potentially interesting but the technology of today, with aerial surveys and geophysics, says there might be something there; I'm not quite sure." If I've got a \$5-million or \$10-million exploration budget, where do I spend it? I'm not going to spend it in a place where I've got a hunch. I'm going to spend it in a place where I've got a really good idea that something is there. So there might be a temptation on the part of some companies to say, "Those are interesting. Let's do the minimal work that we have to do every year. It costs us a few bucks. We'll hang on to it and we'll put it in our exploration plan for the next five or 10 years." Meantime, nothing is going to happen on that land because you can't get access to it. They have locked the ability to do any exploration by virtue of map staking it and doing the minimal amount of work they need to do to hang on to the claim.

1740

So I just say to the minister again, I want to see the regs, man. The regs have really got to come in. Depending on how you frame the regulations, there is a potential for land to be staked by people far away from northern Ontario. Again, it's going to lend itself to this sense that people have in the north that all these decisions are being made by people in southern Ontario. We need to have a little bit more control about what happens in our backyard.

I understand why you did map staking, because it fixes your problem of having somebody go into a First Nation and staking ground without the First Nation ever knowing. So I understand why you did it, I understand the logic of it. I've been around this long enough to know it's one of the potential fixes around First Nations all of a sudden getting unexpected guests arriving on their territory and staking claims such as we saw in K-I and other places that have led to much confrontation. So the idea would be that the explorationist can stake it by map but there would be a requirement in this legislation that you would then have to have a discussion with the First Nation and every step of the process there would have to be a negotiation with the First Nation as to what is going to happen on that land, how it's going to happen, what the benefits are for the community etc. So the map

staking is to get around that first problem of having somebody just show up all of a sudden on your land. Because the real issue—and this is really the tough one, I think, that you have to face in this legislation. On the one side you've got people who are traditionalists, such as myself and yourself and others, who enjoy the way of life in northern Ontario and understand that staking is part of what people do; it's a career in itself. On the other hand, you have to find a way to get around having people show up at the doorstep of First Nations unannounced. So how do you fix it? The minister decided, and I can understand the logic, to go to map staking, but I think this, not properly done, will lead to a few people potentially controlling huge tracts of land, and I'm not so sure that's a really good idea in the long run. So the map staking point I think we need to take a look at again when it comes to that.

There was another point I wanted to make about map staking, pardon me. I'll have to come back to it because I forget what it is; I never write my speeches down.

The other thing I want to talk about is the powers of the inspector. This is the interesting thing. As I looked at the legislation on Thursday, when I got it—I started reading it before I came into the House, and I read it in detail over the weekend—there is a huge section that gives powers to go into a mine property and do inspections. I have to believe the reason you are doing this is to try to make the legislation—how would you say?—work with other pieces of provincial legislation under the Ministry of Finance and others in order to determine what it is that mining companies have under the ground and what they've pulled in order to figure out what your royalties are.

Let me explain this in a simple sense, because the minister and I know what we're talking about and I'm speaking a bit of a different language. Here's what it is: Mining companies have to pay royalties, and the royalties they pay are based on the amount of ore they extract from underground. That's one portion of the tax you pay. So if you're a gold mine and you extract X amount of ounces, the province of Ontario gets a royalty based on how many ounces you've extracted from that particular property; and if you're a diamond mine, the same. If you're a diamond mine, you pay royalties based on how many diamonds you've extracted from the property. What we have in this legislation is a section under "Inspections" that gives a huge amount of power to provincial inspectors under the Ministry of Mines to enter the mining company property and to physically get access to absolutely any record, any time of the day, without warrant. I've got to ask a question: How many mining companies, Minister, have not properly reported their royalties? I think it's zero; I really do. Because it's not in their economic interest to falsify the records when it comes to royalties, for all kinds of reasons, because they're also financed. As they go out to the markets in order to get money, they have to list, "This mine produces X ounces per year." If you lowball that number, your mine is worth less money, so it's valued dif-

ferently and it means you can't go to the market and get more money, because it has less value. So it's not to your advantage, as a mining company, to say, "I'm going to lowball and I'm going to lie about how much gold or diamonds or whatever is extracted from the underground." There's no upside for a company to do that. Yet in this bill, there's this whole section on inspections that says that an inspector of the crown can walk into a mining company, can do that at the mine, can go in the underground, can come to Bay Street, can look at computers, can seize equipment, can copy all kinds of records—they have complete access to all of the financial records and all of the data, including the geological data that that company has.

I ask myself, why do we need this? The answer I got from the briefing today was, "Oh, this is only to make us"—not "compliant;" what is the word I'm looking for?—"to make it that the laws of the Ministry of Finance are the same as they are over here." That was the answer to the question.

I have to propose the following. There's not a lot that's known about diamonds. I call this the De Beers clause. That's what this is, right, Minister? It's a De Beers clause. He's not going to say. He's good, I have to say.

I think that this is because Ontario does not know a lot about diamond mining, because we've never had diamonds in Ontario. The regime, as it was set up at the Ministry of Mines before, was around precious metals and base metals, which is a different type of mining. Valuation of diamonds, as far as quality goes, is very different. It's not like you get an ounce of gold and it's worth \$963 an ounce. You get a 10-carat diamond and that could be worth a whole bunch of different values, depending on the quality of the diamond.

The diamond industry is a fairly secretive industry, for their own reasons, right or wrong. There is a lot of information that they don't want to share with other mining companies. Frankly, De Beers has been pretty good over the years at managing the market fairly well so that they can keep the value of the diamonds up.

I think that the government—wrongfully so—is saying, "We need to give ourselves the power to walk into the De Beers operation and look at any record that we want in order to make sure that they're not hoodwinking us when it comes to royalties." I say to myself, what would be the upside for De Beers to do that? Why, then, would the government need this right in the legislation, in order to walk into the pit, the sorting rooms, the mill, the head office—you can walk into Jim Gowans's office and open his desk, under this legislation, and say, "What's that thing in the corner pocket of your desk?"

I just think that this is wrong-headed. I don't think that, as a government, you should be taking the position of giving yourselves this kind of extraordinary power to go into a mine operation and do this.

Again, it will be interesting to see what is said once this finally comes back into committee. I can tell you that we're going to get a few people speaking on that par-

ticular issue, and I'd be interested in seeing what the government has to say in regard to this particular part.

The last thing I want to speak to is the consultation process, as far as the technical part of the bill goes. What you've now got inside this bill is that there's going to be a process by which First Nations will have to be contacted every time—excuse me, I already spoke to the consultation process. That's not what I wanted to talk about. Sorry. I wanted to get to prospecting licences. Excuse me. That's where I was going. I forgot to write that point down, but that's what I did want.

Mr. Dave Levac: Start over.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm not starting over. I don't believe in repeating speeches. I've recycled a few too many here, over the years.

I just want to say that the government has done something in this legislation, and it will be interesting how the prospectors see it. We're an old bunch of conundrums, us old guys, right? We don't like change too much. Politicians or prospectors, it's the same. Somebody who has been out there and prospecting for all of these years feels that they know what they're doing.

What this legislation is going to call for is that you're going to have to get a prospector's licence. You will also need, if I understand the legislation correctly, a licence for the other parts of exploration ahead of that. But for the prospectors specifically, they will need to go through a course in order to make sure that they understand what the rules of prospecting are generally, how the legislation works and what their responsibilities are vis-à-vis First Nations.

1750

I can understand why you do that. There's a logic to that. You want to make sure that the people on the ground understand what the rules are. It'll be interesting to see the reaction of the prospecting community on that one, from those people who have been in the business for 25 or 30 years. I would imagine there's going to be a lot of pushback on this particular one. I note in the legislation that there's an ability for the minister to grandfather those prospectors who have been in for—how many years is it? I think it's 10 years or five; I can't remember. Anyway, we'll talk about the details later.

It'll be interesting to see how that's applied, because there are two things you're going to have to do. One of them is, you've got to make sure they understand what the process of consultation is and what the requirements are under the law, at the same time respecting the years of experience they have in prospecting. They may feel they're adequately prepared and you may feel they're not, and it may cause some conflict for some of the prospectors. So it'll be interesting.

My point is, I'm going to be looking forward to seeing what prospectors have to say about that, and specifically the issues around grandfathering, so that we respect those people who have been in the business for years and don't put ourselves in the position of saying, "You've been in this for 30 years, but I know better than you." So I think we need to take a look at that.

Madam Speaker, there's about enough time for questions and comments. I would thank you for having the patience of listening to my presentation, and I look forward to committee.

Last point: Make sure this bill travels. I want this bill to travel to those mining communities, such as Kirkland Lake and others. We need to do properly this summer so that people get a chance to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much to the member for Timmins–James Bay. I listen intently, as he knows, and I appreciate his great concern and knowledge about the mining sector. I wish I had more than two minutes to comment, but we'll have many discussions over the next little while.

I do think there is a quality, though, may I say, which I think he might even acknowledge, to some degree—and he struggled with it—of trying to have it both ways. In other words, you certainly expressed concerns about the process that we need to go to to have an appropriate, respectful relationship with our aboriginal partners and communities, at the same time understanding the need to be able to provide clarity and certainty to the mining sector. I think that in and of itself presents some challenges, which is why we worked so hard on this legislation to find that balance. There are various elements of every issue he touched on that I'd like to comment on. May I say that our goal was to find that balance, and we certainly believe that, in many ways, we have done a good job of finding it.

For example, the discussion around the permission clause, as you put it: Your interpretation is that it's being put in place to basically avoid the consultation process or stop it. I don't interpret it that way at all. The fact is, the scenario I can see developing is, you've got an opportunity for mining development, you've got support for the First Nations and you want to move forward, but the community land use plan is not in place yet. I see that that may be a situation where you may need to be able to say, "We need to move forward on this opportunity. It's in the social and economic interests of Canada." You tend to see it as a clause to be used to stop consultation. This clause would not, in any way, stop the requirement of consultation. That's something that I think I need to say.

I am running out of time, but I appreciate your thoughts on it. We'll have more discussions about this, but I very much appreciated your comments. They were very well informed, as always.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I concur with one point: The member from Timmins–James Bay indicated that this legislation was just introduced on Thursday. It is difficult to get up to speed and to fully appreciate what's going on here. I'm still working on the toxics legislation and what impact that legislation will have on the mining industry. That's legislation that's modelled on the state of

Massachusetts, which I don't think has a very significant mining industry. So I'm a little concerned about that.

I do appreciate Minister Gravelle stressing the importance of mining, and he previously talked about the importance of consultation. I attended one of the Toronto consultation evenings—probably last September, early fall. A lot of people were there from Haliburton county, as I recall, concerned about the potential for uranium exploration. We know much of this seems to deal with nickel, copper and gold.

The member from Timmins—James Bay mentioned the north-south division. Some of my questions—does this legislation have any impact on the gypsum mines in my area? Caledonia and Hagersville are gypsum mining towns, essentially, in my riding. I've lived next to a very large aggregate gravel pit since the 1950s; it's south of our farm. We have no intention of that kind of quarrying to go up Crabapple Creek into our land. We have a number of gas wells on our land; the natural gas industry is very important in southern Ontario. The area I live in has more holes punched in the ground than Saudi Arabia, because we've been drilling for natural gas since the 1840s and the 1850s. I think of the oil industry—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I love to do a couple minutes on this particular bill because I truly enjoyed the rendition by the member from Timmins—James Bay and our own minister from the north, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. When I wanted to tease my colleagues, I would say I was going north to my riding. They would look at me with funny eyes and say, "You're going north? Where's your riding?" I would say, "Well, it's south of Steeles," and they'd say, "Oh, my goodness."

But truly we have seen a bill that is a first, and in the words of the minister, it's not the last that we have seen of this particular bill. As he says in his own words, this has got a long way to go, and I'm sure that we will see a lot of input as the bill move along.

Picking up on the last comment by the member from James Bay, that both of them come from the north, yes, I would say they are the specialists when it comes to the north. I have to say there should be no concern for those prospectors that want to obtain a licence. If we want to go fishing—and we had a chuckle with the Attorney General. If you want to go fishing you need a licence, so if you want to go mining, you need a licence. Instead, you go fishing for something very much more valuable: for gold and silver and whatever.

But I truly enjoyed the minister here giving this wonderful rendition as to the vastness and the richness that is northern Ontario. And I have to say that if Bay Street is to Canada what it is in the financial world, then northern Ontario is the mining capital of Canada. I think we have to really appreciate what the minister is trying to do with this particular bill. It is the first time that something such as this is happening on a comprehensive basis, and I'm looking forward to seeing much more of it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I enjoyed listening to the member speak. He certainly knows his business about the mining industry, and it's always nice to listen to someone who is speaking knowledgeably about a subject, which happens far too little around this place.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would like to speak about apples, myself. I could cover that subject; this is not my forte. But the comments that he makes about claim staking and map staking and the conflicts between the two and what happens if somebody claims something on a map staking at 9 o'clock in the morning and somebody wanders through the bush and says they made that claim at 8:30 in the morning—which one has precedence and where is the dispute settlement mechanism?

The other one that the member from way up north there brought to my attention was the secrets that people have in the mining business—I mean, it's huge. Having government come in and have a look at your books as to what you took out of the ground, where you took it out, how much more is there, having access to your records—I would think that would give mining companies huge pause if they were looking at locating in Ontario, if they were trying to choose a place to mine, whether that choice revolved around Ontario, Labrador or B.C., South America or Africa. All of these companies basically have capital—capital to make these things work—and capital has wings. Capital goes to the place in the world where you can have the highest return on it. We've got to make sure that Ontario remains a very friendly place for people with capital.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from way up north in Timmins—James Bay has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: From all the way up north here, I want to say to all of you: Thank all very much for having a great time and speaking to my bill here. I just want to thank members for their comments. I tried, as much as possible, to be somewhat analytical in my presentation here today. I'm going to be looking forward to this bill going to committee. The minister has indicated that, yes, this bill will travel and we'll have the opportunity in places like Kirkland Lake and other places where there are mining activities happening so that we can hear from those people who are most affected: First Nations, people who are involved in the mining industry and environmentalists, so that we can really do what needs to be done with this legislation.

I want to ask again, is this a step in the right direction? Yes. Does it get us to where we want to go? I don't think so. I think we need to fix a number of the parts of this bill to give people comfort, especially First Nations, when it comes to being able to really get a sense that they can negotiate a good deal for themselves when it comes to the benefits of mining. More importantly—I shouldn't say "more importantly," but equally importantly, we need to make sure that the mining industry has a certain com-

fort and clarity about knowing what the rules are, because if you do that, it's a lot easier to attract investment here in Ontario. And for the environmentalists, at the end, which we all are—if you're First Nations or if you're a member of this Legislature or you live in northern Ontario, we're all environmentalists and we need to make sure that this bill properly reflects the best practices possible to make sure that we protect our environment for now and into the future.

With that, I would like to thank the members for having commented on my speech.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow, May 5, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Haltoun Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
		Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Tamil Canadian community

Mr. Michael Prue 6495

Road safety

Mr. Reza Moridi..... 6495

Taxation

Mr. Ted Arnott 6495

Infrastructure program funding

Mr. Bill Mauro 6496

Celiac disease

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 6496

Michelle Mendes

Mr. Lou Rinaldi..... 6496

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Gasoline Tax Fairness for All Act, 2009, Bill 174, Mr. Yakabuski / Loi de 2009 sur l'équité pour tous à l'égard de la taxe sur l'essence, projet de loi 174, M. Yakabuski

First reading agreed to..... 6497

Mr. John Yakabuski 6497

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Sexual Assault Prevention Month

Hon. Deborah Matthews 6497

Recherche scientifique / Scientific research

L'hon. John Wilkinson..... 6497

Sexual Assault Prevention Month

Ms. Sylvia Jones 6499

Recherche scientifique

M. Gilles Bisson..... 6499

Sexual Assault Prevention Month

Ms. Cheri DiNovo..... 6500

Allan Lawrence

Mr. John O'Toole..... 6500

Mr. Michael Prue 6501

Hon. James J. Bradley..... 6501

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 6503

Taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones..... 6503

Hospital funding

Mr. Bob Delaney 6503

Pension plans

Mr. Ted Chudleigh 6503

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue 6503

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell 6504

Multiple myeloma

Mr. Robert Bailey..... 6504

Air quality

Mr. Charles Sousa 6504

Hospital funding

Mr. John O'Toole..... 6504

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle..... 6505

Child care

Ms. Sylvia Jones..... 6505

Community safety

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 6505

Hospital funding

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 6505

Child custody

Mr. Jim Brownell 6505

Pension plans

Mr. John O'Toole..... 6506

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman..... 6506

Mr. Michael Prue 6508

Mr. Bill Mauro 6512

Ms. Sylvia Jones..... 6513

Mrs. Carol Mitchell..... 6514

Ms. Lisa MacLeod 6515

Mr. David Zimmer 6516

Mr. Toby Barrett 6517

Mr. Charles Sousa 6518

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer 6519

M. Gilles Bisson..... 6520

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 6522

Motion negated 6523

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Mining Amendment Act, 2009, Bill 173,

Mr. Gravelle / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les mines, projet de loi 173, M. Gravelle

Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	6523
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6527
Mr. Michael Prue	6527
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	6527
Mr. Mike Colle	6528
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	6528
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6528
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	6536
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	6536
Mr. Mario Sergio	6537
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6537
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6537
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	6538

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 4 May 2009 / Lundi 4 mai 2009

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. John Wilkinson.....	6483
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6483
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6483
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	6483

Wearing of ribbons

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6483
-------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6483
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6483

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6484
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6484

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6485
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6485

Northern Ontario

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6486
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6486

Green power generation

Mr. John Yakabuski	6486
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6487

Children's mental health services

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6487
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6487

Environmental protection

Mr. Joe Dickson	6488
Hon. Jim Watson.....	6488
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6488

Taxation

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6488
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6489

Nurses

Mme France Gélinas	6489
Hon. David Caplan.....	6489

Mining industry

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	6490
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	6490
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	6490

Taxation

Mr. Ted Arnott	6490
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	6490

Student grants

Mr. Rosario Marchese	6491
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6491

Heritage conservation

Mr. Rick Johnson	6491
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	6492

Taxation

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6492
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	6492

Sewage sludge

Mr. Howard Hampton	6493
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	6493

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Employment Standards Amendment Act

(Temporary Help Agencies), 2009, Bill 139, Mr. Fonseca / Loi de 2009 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (agences de placement temporaire), projet de loi 139, M. Fonseca	
Third reading agreed to	6494

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	6494
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6494
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6494
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6494

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Children's mental health services

Mrs. Julia Munro	6494
------------------------	------

Infrastructure program funding

Mr. Jim Brownell.....	6494
-----------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6494
-----------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
X1
-D23



No. 145

N° 145

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

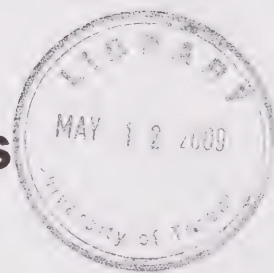
First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Tuesday 5 May 2009

Mardi 5 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOXICS REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES TOXIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 29, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts / *Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à promouvoir une réduction de l'utilisation et de la création de substances toxiques et à modifier d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: This bill has been before the House for a while, and it's my assumption that the bill will go to committee. In the event that it does go to committee, I'm sure the government would be interested in having public hearings from sectors in the economy that this will have an impact on. I suspect that our very capable critic, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, has done a great job in terms of outlining our position.

Let's be clear. The very first thing is that we, on this side of the House, would agree—if I look at the purpose clause, it's a good way to start here. In the purpose clause, it says the purposes of the bill are:

“(a) to prevent pollution and protect human health and the environment by reducing the use and creation of toxic substances; and

“(b) to inform Ontarians about toxic substances.”

We would agree with the intent, clearly. I think everyone in the House would. But when you get down into the details, the micro level of the bill, you find out that here we have a litany of red tape. That's what is really referred to: a litany of red tape. We're not opposed to that, but it's when you look at how you'd implement a policy of this nature, when you're dealing with larger industrial sectors, and Ontario trying to be a competitive sector, and safe, let's be clear on that—and a leader, which we're not at the moment. That's probably a discussion that we had yesterday.

But here's the real key: When you look at a sector—for instance, let's take the cement industry, which is very

big in Quebec and very big in Ontario. It's certainly very big in my riding of Durham. St Marys Cement has operated quite consistently within our community for many, many years, a good, law-abiding and contributing corporate citizen. At one time, it was owned by a family. In fact, the family who owned it was from St. Marys, Ontario. Now, the consistency argument is that even here in Ontario, we find that there's inconsistency in what's permitted in that industrial sector between Quebec and Ontario. Then we wonder why we're not competitive. How do I work this through as just one example of one sector by one change of the government? From what I understand, in this bill—and this perhaps would be clarified in public hearings—this industry would be disadvantaged.

The real success story here is this: The federal government has an overarching responsibility here to set standards that are consistent, not just for commercial and trade reasons, but for public health purposes. I then become a bit suspicious that this is more feel-good than actually do-good kind of legislation. It's more of a feeling thing. It's almost like they're pandering to a group of people out there who put the environment ahead of all things. Look, I think that's a respectable and responsible position to take, but it must stand the test of scrutiny. I challenge the minister, who I know to be a good person, and well-intentioned, to send this for public review—not like the HST, where there was no consultation: They're just going to slam on a tax, probably \$2 billion or \$3 billion in revenue. We all know that Ontario has a huge revenue problem. In fact, we're a have-not province now; we're getting \$400 million or \$500 million from the federal government—which is good. But we're becoming less and less competitive, and this is just one more example. I just mentioned one example in my riding: the cement industry being impacted by this.

To do my due diligence as a member representing a very excellent riding with a good mixture of agriculture, residential and business, to the extent that we have three or four major industries—one would be St. Marys Cement, which I mentioned. Another one would be—I'm expecting the members to be listening here; they are doing a lot of work—the nuclear industry. The nuclear industry is very big. There's new-build nuclear in my riding. I'm wondering if there would be any “toxic materials,” possibly? Well, this is the issue. Are we going to be consistent in this legislation with Ontario Hydro—the OPG now, Ontario Power Generation—in Darlington and Pickering? They have motors and fans and pumps and all sorts of heavy water and various things that are man-created. Many of them are created by man. I'm won-

dering how this bill fits into that realm. That's just another constituent of mine, a corporate constituent, if you will, public sector. Of course they're public sector, because I read the salaries in the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, and a lot of them are on that list. They're all my constituents, which is good.

But here's the point. I'm really going to summarize now by saying one thing: The issue is consistency. We shouldn't have one standard in Ontario that isn't consistent with our neighbours, let's say Quebec and Manitoba. That just makes common sense. Most of these companies or individual clients don't operate in isolation. I think it's very important to be consistent with the federal standards. Of course, we should strengthen those standards. I have no problem with that; I'm all in favour of that.

But you know, it reminds me of another recent bill, referred to as the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act. There's another good example. What has happened here in this one is another good example—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Municipal Affairs is here, and he's speaking out of turn, perhaps. I'd better mention him, because he was the mayor of the city of Ottawa; he knows what I'm speaking of. In Hudson, they started the push for the cosmetic thing, I'm aware of that, and your government responded to it. The difference is they got it wrong; they really did. The intent is good, we support the intent, but they got the methodology and the transactions wrong.

Why do I say that? I'm getting letters. There's another sector that's affected by this, because it could be related to this toxics bill, when you're talking about pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. These things are man-created. They could be reviewed under the toxic measures. I see this affecting agriculture, not just the cosmetic pesticide piece. I see this having more fingers in everyone's tool shed. I think it's another feel-good government—how do you implement it? How do you enforce it? Who sets the standard? And how come Ontario has different standards than other provinces?

0910

I also find out that the organic farmers are now complaining about this poorly drafted, ill-conceived cosmetic pesticide legislation, which is now going to affect agriculture. They said that they were exempt, but now they're not. Organic farmers use certain types of chemistry and formulas that are innate in terms of their impact on human health, but now they find out that they're going to be affected. And now I'm finding out that the greenhouse industry is affected by this cosmetic thing. Again, these measures—well intended—are inconsistent, and I've made that argument during this.

Federally, they have an organization called the PMRA, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. They actually study, investigate, have scientists and teams of people that determine what's going to be imported into Canada, whether it's at Home Depot, Canadian Tire, RONA, farmers at co-ops or wherever you buy these things for your lawn. These are liable to come from other

provinces and countries, so we have to have consistency of standards. Instead, Ontario has got their own little silo, a whole bunch more red tape, paper and forms for people to fill out and to send in. If you don't have it, you get fined; an inspector comes in and he fines you, and you say "I did send the"—it's just running out of control.

I'm actually right now becoming extremely frustrated, because everything they have has binders full of regulatory—you've got to get the lawyer. This bill here that we're talking about, Bill 167, it's got the same stuff; I see it right here. It's right in the purpose clause. It says right here: "If a toxic substance reduction plan"—the plan. Who is supposed to be qualified to do that? You'd have to have a PhD in chemistry or microbiology. Dr. Donald Low perhaps would have to do this report. I hope not. It says, "If a toxic substance reduction plan is required to be prepared, a summary of the plan must also be prepared and made available to the public."

I have no problem with that, but now you've got a small company that is getting started, they bought this product that's approved by the federal government—they brought it in from, say, Nova Scotia. It's got a nice picture of a sailboat on it or something. They bring it in and they make this material, and now they say that they have to submit a plan. Now they have to get somebody with a PhD from Guelph, perhaps several universities, to do a consulting report, which would probably cost in the order of—what would it cost, \$25,000? It wouldn't be all that much. They're selling this thing worth \$5, so they'd have to sell about 5,000 boxes to pay for the consultant's report, so they're out of business. That's basically what this is. If this is unsafe, it should be unsafe in Nova Scotia, in Ontario and certainly in BC. But here we have Ontario, which has its own book of rules, its own lab full of PhD physicists and chemists and bureaucracy-creating red tape.

This bill here is, I guess, modelled after the Massachusetts model, which apparently has created a lot of bureaucracy and red tape, which is the point I'm trying to make.

Also, the cement association has made it clear—and I'll read it here. How much time do I have?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Nine minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, well, there's plenty of time. I intend to take it all.

This is what the Cement Association of Canada had to say on the lack of a risk-based initiative contained in Bill 167, the toxics reduction bill:

"A risk-based approach focused on quality of effort, rather than quantity, would be both more efficient and effective in reducing such risks." So they're not against it. See, this is the key.

"A legislated requirement to develop comprehensive tracking/mass balance systems and generic management plans for all of the listed toxic substances, regardless of the actual risks posed, would not represent a good use of industry or government resources." Here it is from experts that do it for a living. They go on to say:

"This is a key criticism of the similar blanket approach to release reporting under O. Reg 127/01 and the National Pollutant Release Inventory. The obligation to estimate releases on such a broad number of substances results in low data quality."

You see, you're racking minute, minuscule, obscure—and so you get poor quality, because they're frustrated or perhaps not really qualified. Then you've got to train all these people. There would have to be a new course developed at the colleges to train these technicians who are qualified to go in, do the litmus test or whatever test it is, and it's more bureaucracy. The person's not in, so the plant shuts down, because you have to have this qualified technician to test these various things.

When you look at this, the practicality of just getting the uniformity in standards first would take some time, which you should be working on with the federal government—I'm sure there's a panel of well-paid civil servants working on these kinds of things—and then working with the industry and the sectors to ensure that there's a transition to this. If there's something known to be unsafe, it should be stopped, ceased immediately.

But these substances that they're going to study over the longer term—whoa. Because, look, let's be honest: Everything from the ink in the printer of your computer to the gas you put in the car and to everything you put on—cosmetics, makeup and all the rest of the stuff—is probably toxic. Some of the skin creams are toxic. I'm not surprised that maybe some of these things we're using today—even most of the medication we take is being taken to kill something like some kind of bacteria, and the extra pills they're flushing down the toilet and stuff. I don't know how they get rid of them. But you've got to be very careful. If you're going to do the job, don't make it sound like you're doing it and then not do it.

The goal and objective is laudable. We support it. The methodology, in my view, is flawed—seriously flawed. Ontario can't go it alone and shouldn't go it alone. I guess that other matters provide that the bill include the following—

Interruption.

Hon. Jim Watson: That's Randy Hillier on line one.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member from Durham is using his cell phone as a prop. That's not allowed in the rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's not a point of order, but I appreciate the issue being brought to my attention. I return to the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The one good point is that it's now true that the member from Eglinton—Lawrence is here. I thought, for instance, that he wasn't paying attention, but he is, and I'm pleased that he is, because I'm sure he'll mention some of the comments to the Minister of the Environment, who has got this bill before us. I would encourage him to actually get the Hansard for tomorrow and give him a copy, because the things I'm saying are very practical in nature, and maybe other people don't get into the how-do-you-implement questions.

Again, in reading this, I listened most intently to our critic, Mr. Barrett, who, I think, summarized our con-

cerns quite succinctly. People were mentioning that there's a leadership race in Ontario for the Conservative Party. There are four fabulous people that are absolutely committed to drawing the people of Ontario's attention to the opposition party trying to hold the fort here. We're trying to hold the fort. We have Tim Hudak, an excellent member. I would say Frank Klees is another excellent member. Randy Hillier is a new member, but he has got a lot of contributions to make, as well as Christine Elliott. Christine Elliott—there were a lot of media clippings about her this morning. I questioned them on their position on this bill. They want the same thing. They want safety in Ontario first, and they want consistency for commercial and other economic reasons.

I should put this on the record as well, out of due respect: I have in my riding a company that's very highly regarded, and it's involved across the province of Ontario for sure. They are highly qualified. I think the two principal partners worked for the Ministry of the Environment at one time. They saw a need in our communities, in our cities and province, to deal with spills and other tragic environmental events, so they invented a company which abides by the rules. Even their trucks are clean, even their whole training regime—everything I see and hear. There's just a quiet, effective operation. The company is Detox Environmental. You see their equipment moving around to where they may have had a diesel spill or a traffic accident where there have been some materials spilled. They would be an industry that I would want to comment on this bill in public hearings.

There's more to be said, and most of it has been said by our critic and others. Many people in our caucus wanted me to get up this morning and speak—well, at least one of them did, anyway.

0920

I look at these things in a very practical, implementation method. What I see here is a very laudable, credible and acceptable goal: to make Ontario cleaner, and safer from toxic materials. The young pages here today only get a two-week stint with us, I think. Not that; that is good, and we support that goal. What we don't support is creating more paperwork and red tape—you know what I mean?—and industries, like in my riding, being put out of business because of the litany of new tests, new experiments and new kinds of definitions. The province should be following the lead of and working in co-operation with the federal government, under Lisa Raitt and maybe John Baird and some of the people up in Ottawa, to get the framework right, to have these toxic materials identified, have a regime for reporting them, a protocol for action required and a method of enforcement. That's really what I want to see.

I'm sure, after my remarks this morning and the comments from some of the members, including a couple of ministers here this morning, that they will probably withdraw this bill and rewrite it, I hope—my remarks, at the very least. But in the event that they don't, we'll be there at the hearings, and we'll be holding their feet to the fire to do the right thing and get it right.

Let's not act carelessly and put the economy of Ontario at risk. This is the most troubling part of it all. It's my understanding that in Windsor there are thousands of people out of work—families. There's an article in the paper this morning that's very unnerving. The economy is crashing off the cliff in parts of Ontario. This government is tinkering with things that aren't really their primary responsibility, while families are shaking and stressed because of the lack of action and consistency of plan by a government that seems to have lost its way in the middle of its second term. This is one more bill that creates more bureaucracy, more red tape, puts more jobs at risk and potentially puts our economy at risk.

I couldn't ignore the opportunity to put my comments on the record this morning. For that privilege, I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we move to questions and comments, I'm compelled to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 47(c), six and a half hours of debate having taken place on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, this debate will stand adjourned, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise. Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Yes, we would like the debate to continue, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The debate shall continue. Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened carefully to the comments of my Conservative colleague. Let me say this: There is one area where I think New Democrats can agree with his critique, and that is that the government has brought forward a bill which is so vague, so lacking in definition and so lacking in specifics that it makes it very difficult for anyone involved in this debate to know exactly what the outcomes will be. If someone cares a great deal about the environment and wants to see a more strict application of the law and wants to see a broader development of the law, they're not really certain what is contained in this bill and what this bill is eventually going to do.

By the same token, someone who is trying to run a manufacturing operation—let us say someone who is involved in the chemical industry or the cement industry or even the pulp and paper industry—when reading this bill, would not be offered any clear guidelines as to what they should do, what they should not do, what they should anticipate and what kinds of investments they should make or what kinds of costs they should incur.

This is very much the opposite of what governments are supposed to do. Governments are supposed to provide some transparency, some clarity so that people can understand the law, understand what it applies to and understand what it requires. This is a bill with a fancy name, but it's very hard to determine exactly what the substance is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add my comments to the bill that's being debated this morning. I'd like to

commend the member for Durham for his clear, concise and comprehensive remarks, as always, on this bill. He's pointed out some of the shortfalls that our caucus, the PC caucus, sees in the bill. We look forward to working through the legislation to help make this bill better and have it withdrawn in the end, if that's possible.

Like the pesticides ban, we see that this is more government decision and legislation based on more emotion and concern than actual fact and science. There's a federal program already in place which people say is a world leader. I know in my community of Sarnia-Lambton we're very heavily involved in the chemical industry. I worked for 30 years in that industry and I know the kinds of controls that have been installed over the years. It's certainly advanced dramatically since I first entered the business. I know I've spoken to a number of industry leaders back there and they've got great concerns at this time in the economy at the introduction of a bill like this. To quote from the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, "The federal risk assessment process is well respected, well resourced, costly," and "Ontario should not try to duplicate" this. The federal program is recognized as "a global leader."

"Ontario would leverage the efforts of the federal government and would apply its requirements for planning reductions to the right substances—those that have been shown to actually pose a risk."

In closing, the question remains, why would we in Ontario be spending our resources and our businesses' resources on an inadequate system that is doomed to achieve little in the way of effective results due to its lack of focus on risk or science?

I think this is just another example of one of these feel-good bills that's going to belabour business at this time when it can ill afford it. I think we need to move forward on this and look to improving it in committee, as the member for Durham said. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just to follow up on the comments of the member for Durham and as well the member for Sarnia-Lambton, there's no question that we have been critical of the government's approach to this particular bill, this toxics legislation, even though in April 2007 we came out with a proposal requiring mandatory planning on the part of industry with respect to not only the use of toxics, but the reduction and, in some cases, the elimination. So we have been very critical. However, we do put forward a positive approach, which we did put forward actually in April 2007. We all recognize that five months later, the government attempted to mimic what we had put out to the people of Ontario. But as far as the aspects of our particular plan, to go beyond some of the criticism we've heard this morning of the McGuinty government's approach, we concur and this government concurs with our approach to have industry put together these plans.

We take it further with respect to implementation—and I know the government talks about voluntary imple-

mentation, and we find that a little suspect, especially when you hear about the police powers that are contained within this legislation. But we also put forward, to ensure moving forward on implementation, that there be grants, perhaps targeted tax credits, to provide that incentive for business to move forward. We're very clear: We have to create a made-in-Ontario approach to take into consideration how we do business in the economy and, most importantly—and this was said this morning—we have to use that federal work that's already been done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

I return to the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was very flattered by the former leader of the NDP, Mr. Hampton from Rainy River, commenting, and more specifically, about how it affects his economy in his riding with the pulp and paper industry. The government's actions over the last number of years have near crippled—whether it's the price of energy or now more red tape, I suspect—how many jobs and communities at risk.

0930

I think it's important that we relate legislation to how it affects the people we're elected to represent. The member from Sarnia-Lambton, who represents an area with the petrochemical industry, would certainly have much to say on this. Why would Nova Chemical and other companies that create jobs and products that are legal and accepted worldwide today be at risk of having more paperwork to do? Our critic, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, of course, has done a stellar job in terms of just asking the question, "Why, if you want to do this, is it voluntary?"

Now, the stakeholders who are listening this morning, who were in touch with me—I'm looking at their e-mail here. I have one from Kathleen Perchaluk. She says here, "To ensure the Toxics Reduction Act will integrate the best in health protection with a concern for a sustainable economy, a clean environment and good jobs," they want the following 5R recommendations to be followed. So the minister can use this as his leverage.

What are the 5Rs? They are (1) reduce the releases; (2) replace toxic chemicals; (3) restrict use of toxic chemicals; (4) report regularly; and (5) reveal to Ontarians.

These are simple guidelines, but at the same time, let's go back to first principles. We should be working in co-operation with the other provinces and the federal government to make Canada and its economy sustainable, as well as the health of Ontarians and Canadians. This isn't about Ontario and Premier McGuinty doing another feel-good thing. This is about doing the right thing, the right way at the right time for the right purpose. Those ingredients are missing, and I think that the government should rethink and redraft the bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to engage in some discussion of this bill. I'm

pleased to have this opportunity, because I think there is a need for this kind of legislation in Ontario. But there is also a need for legislation which is clear, which is transparent, which sets out so that the public—people who are concerned about the environment and people who are involved in the industrial economy—can read and clearly understand what the goals are, what the targets are, what specifically is going to be focused on and what the requirements are. It seems to me that in the 21st century, when governments seek to pass legislation, there should be that element of transparency to it. There should be that element of clarity to it so that people will know: What does the law require, and what specifically is the law focused on? What are the timelines and targets? What will be the penalties if these targets are not reached within the timelines?

Now, let me say, coming from a manufacturing part of the province, the reason that this is important is that if a manufacturing facility wants to comply with the law, quite often that may involve millions—if not tens of millions, perhaps hundreds of millions—of dollars of new investment. So you need to know: What is the target? What is this focused on—clearly, and not some vague notion about, "Well, toxics," without a definition of the toxics that are focused on, and with some vague concept about sometime in the future without mentioning specifically when this is going to come into effect, what it's going to do and what it's going to require. Having legislation like that is no guide whatsoever and doesn't aid, let's say, a manufacturing facility in doing what they may want to do to better protect the environment.

An offshoot of this is that if you're going to have to make a \$1-million investment, a \$10-million investment or a \$100-million investment, you need to know what the timeline is; \$100 million doesn't appear out of the air in a few days or even a few years. You need to have clear guidelines. You need to have clear targets. You need to be able to say, "This is what's required, this is when it's required, and this is what we are required to do in order to meet the legislation."

I just want to give you a practical example. Paper mills and pulp mills—and this is the reality—do spew out of their stack certain chemical residues that result from the manufacturing process. At a pulp mill in my constituency in Dryden it was determined, about 10 years ago, that to comply with Ontario's air quality standards, they would have to shut down their pulp mill boiler and recovery unit because it simply couldn't meet Ontario's air quality targets, Ontario's air quality requirements, and they would have to finance and construct a new pulp mill boiler and recovery unit. To do that was a \$750-million investment. Just to do the planning, in terms of the financial planning, the construction planning and the materials planning, was a four-year process. The construction process itself involved close to another four years. Then there was the process of integrating the new boiler and recovery unit into the overall operation of the pulp mill.

This is why when we pass legislation here in the Ontario Legislature there need to be clear targets. People

need to know: What is being focused on? What is required? What are the timelines? What must be done in order to meet these targets within these timelines? I can tell you, if you read this bill, none of those things are present. So how is someone who's operating a manufacturing facility in this province to know what they're required to do, what the targets are, what the specific objective is, what the timelines are, and how they must proceed in order to meet the requirements of this law? There's nothing there. The legislation is of no assistance whatsoever.

The McGuinty Liberals say, "Oh, but we're going to put this in regulation, at some later date." Maybe, perhaps, possibly, the government is going to put this in regulation. Again, there is a problem. People need to know with some certainty. You cannot go about changing the law, changing the regulatory requirements every six months and expect that those who are affected will be able to comply. That's why we need some teeth in this bill. That's why we need to be able to understand what is required, when it is required, and what the specific objectives are, the specific targets, the specific timelines, so that either industry or municipalities can comply with the legislation.

I just want to give you an example of how this legislation really fails to meet those requirements. It's not as if this government was drafting this legislation sort of in a fog or in a vacuum. In fact, over the last eight or nine years—just to focus on the last eight or nine years—there have been a number of groups and organizations who have come forward offering expert advice on what needs to be done to address the issue of toxins generally released into our society.

0940

So, for example, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the toxics reduction scientific expert panel have all, in the last eight or nine years, come forward with a very detailed analysis and very detailed prescriptions as to what legislation should look like, what legislation should attempt to do.

In fact, the Canadian Environmental Law Association has gone even further. The Canadian Environmental Law Association even offered up to this government model legislation. It looked at legislation that had been implemented elsewhere in the world, it looked at the expert studies and it offered up model legislation for this government to adopt. I'll just read from the Canadian Environmental Law Association model legislation. They set out a purpose clause, and the purpose of the bill should be: (1) to protect human health and the environment, by reducing the use of toxic substances; (2) to promote the use of safer alternatives to such substances; (3) to recognize the public right to know the identity and amounts of toxic substances in their community from various facilities; and, (4) to apply the precautionary principle and principles of sustainable development to these issues.

So four very clear purposes were defined in the model legislation. What do we find in this legislation that's

being offered up by the McGuinty Liberals? Only one of those purposes. The first one that I listed; the purpose of the bill is to "protect human health and the environment by reducing the use and creation of toxic substances." But the other three purposes that were listed in the model legislation have no place—cannot be found—in this bill. What is wrong with that? I would like to offer up some suggestions about what's wrong with it.

"To promote the use of safer alternatives to such substances": I want to, again, use an example from my part of the province, an example of some specific rules and regulations that were put in place in the mid-1990s and the positive effect they had in terms of this second purpose, providing alternatives. The example I want to use, again, is from the pulp industry. Pulp, when it comes out of a pulping machine in its natural form, is, I guess you can say, sort of brown in colour. But most of us prefer our paper to be as bright as possible for obvious reasons. You can see the print when the paper is bright. You have a hard time seeing the print when the paper is a dark brown or a grey. In the past, chlorine was typically used to bleach pulp. As we know, chlorine is a very powerful toxic substance—a very, very powerful toxic substance.

I was part of a government in the mid-1990s that said to the pulp industry, "We're not going to permit you to use chlorine anymore," because the downstream pollution effects are so bad, not just on human beings, but on fish and other aquatic beings, and the long-lived aspect of chlorine as it makes its way through the ecosystem is terribly destructive. We said to the industry, "Look, pulp industry, there are alternatives to chlorine bleaching. And yes, it will require some investment to use those alternatives." But by saying to the industry, "Not only must you stop using this chemical, but you need to move to alternative processes that are more sustainable," we actually did the industry a favour. And the favour was this: You could not sell pulp that has been bleached by chlorine today virtually anywhere in the world. No one will buy it. If you have not moved on to more sustainable processes, to processes that are less toxic for the environment, you would not be able to sell your pulp. That's what I mean. That's why this second principle, this second purpose, is so important. Yet when you look at this bill, there is no requirement, no movement towards more sustainable processes.

I can tell you that those pulp mills that moved on to the highest level of sustainability—after chlorine was removed by legislation, by prohibition, from the manufacturing process, those mills that set their targets high and moved on to the most sustainable processes are actually doing the best in the world today. Their pulp is sought after by all kinds of users in the secondary and tertiary manufacturing process. Not only was it the right thing to do for the environment, it was actually the right thing to do for jobs and the right thing to do for positioning that industry in Ontario in terms of the future and future opportunities. We find legislation here which the government patted itself on the back for and congratu-

lated itself for, yet we do not find this important principle set out in this bill.

I said earlier that the bill sets no targets for toxics reductions and no benchmarks regarding the success of the initiative—no targets. So if I'm someone in industry and I want to do the right thing and I read this legislation, I'd be no further ahead at the end of reading the legislation; I'd be no further ahead whatsoever. If I owned a paper mill or a pulp mill, if I owned a steel mill or if I owned some other kind of manufacturing process, I would not know, at the end of reading this legislation, where I should be focusing my attention, where we should be doing our research, what we should be planning for or what we should be organizing for in terms of where we need to be five or 10 years down the road. As another political spokesperson said a few years ago, it is like eating a sandwich and at the end of the sandwich asking, "Well, where was the meat?" The sad reality is there is no meat in this legislation.

Just to go further, you would expect, and I think that any reasonable person—any reasonable person—would expect that after reading the bill, you would know what particular sectors of our economy or what particular sectors of manufacturing or processing would be affected by this bill. It just seems to be elementary that you would know, "Is my particular operation, is my particular process, included in this bill or not included in this bill?" But lo and behold, if you read the bill, no particular sectors of the economy are included in the bill. Nothing is identified. If you read some of the discussion paper that was put out by the Ministry of the Environment—by the way, the discussion paper has no particular connection to the bill. The Ministry of the Environment put out a discussion paper and in the discussion paper, it simply said that manufacturing and mineral processing ought to be included in terms of toxic reduction, but that's it.

One is left to say, "Well, manufacturing is very broad." Someone could say making pencils is manufacturing. Someone could say making mousetraps is manufacturing. The chemical industry: Is that manufacturing or is that chemical processing? And that's the difficulty here. In reading the bill, one does not know. One would not come away with any conclusion. One would not be able to tell. If you're running a pulp and paper mill, you wouldn't be able to tell. "Do we need to make investments, do we need to start doing research, do we need to start doing planning to comply with this legislation?" You wouldn't know.

0950

Let me give you some examples that further illustrate this. It's very clear that, for example, if we're concerned about toxins being released into the environment, waste treatment plants and energy generating facilities are some of the highest emitters of toxic substances into the environment. Are they included in this bill or not? Processing plants that take human sewage and process it into sewage sludge on the one hand and then effluent water on the other: Are they included in this bill? Shouldn't they be included? Why aren't they included? Energy producing

plants—a thermal generating station, whether it be natural gas, oil or coal: Are they included? "Are nuclear power plants included?" is a question I think that most people would ask. We recognize that they're subject to federal regulation, but again, this speaks to the total lack of transparency and the absolute vagueness and lack of definition in this bill. I think the government should take it back, start over and do a decent job so that people can actually know what we're dealing with here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say, it's interesting. Both Mr. Hampton and I gave speeches on this bill and what's interesting is that he was not present when I gave my speech, and quite frankly he touched on the same issue, which is that it's a question of choices that the government has to make. Are they going to stand for making sure that we don't just have plans but that we set targets, or is this just all about fluff?

Then he talked about the experiences we had back in the early 1990s when we had to deal with the issue of chlorine and AOX. I remember that particular debate quite well as a member of the government of the day. There were a lot of people in northern Ontario saying, "Boy, you can't go down that way in order to tell the manufacturers of paper in northern Ontario what it is they can do when it comes to discharge into the atmosphere, because we're in the middle of a recession, and if you do that everything is going to come crashing down." Instead, our government took the position of saying, "No, we've got to do what's right by the environment."

The other part was that we then sat down with industry and said, "Here are the targets we want you to achieve so that we can make sure we safeguard the environment for our future, but here are the things we're prepared to do in order to assist you to offset what it's going to cost you to move from the use of chlorine and AOX to other chemicals."

As I said in that speech at the time, we were very instrumental in moving a lot of these paper mills to thermal mechanical pulping. Thermal mechanical pulping was a way to get around some of the issues around some of the chemicals they were using and the old way they used to handle wood in the wood rooms of those paper mills. As well, we sat down and looked at what other things we could do. We were in a position where we said, "There have to be targets. You cannot introduce legislation that at the end is just going to make it voluntary for industry to comply, because industry will just do what industry does."

I think it's incumbent upon a government to say, "You need to balance off the interests of the public and the environment against the interests of the corporate bottom line, and there are ways to get to both," but clearly, in this bill, the government is achieving neither. So I'd ask you the question, why is this bill coming forward at all if the government's not prepared to put targets in?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would again compliment the members from Kenora–Rainy River as well as Timmins–James Bay. They were speaking about an industry that's in serious peril in terms of its economic competitiveness, and they've outlined a couple of concerns about what this bill specifically would do to that sector, that industry and, indeed, those communities in northern Ontario that rely on that type of employment to pay their taxes.

So the whole thing fits together: You have to have the strong-economy argument, and this bill doesn't really do that. In fact, this bill is going to bankrupt many of the small communities just by poor policy.

The price of energy—the NDP have argued for some time now that there should be a differential in the price of energy that supports an industry, especially in northern Ontario, where they can get the energy from plants—power is actually going right by them on the way down to Toronto, and they could be distributing it at a reduced cost.

This is one more case where red tape and regulations are going to bankrupt part of Ontario. Those are tragic signals that the government should at least commit to working with them to implement this in a fair-handed way, to support the initiatives, the inspections and the drafting of these lists that are required, the toxics reduction plans that are required. These are adding costs. It is downloading costs to businesses that are already in financial constraints. These reports, reporting, and annual things that have to be done in compliance with this rule are interfering in those communities. In fact, people could argue today that if they're in compliance with what the regulations are in other provinces, why is Ontario trying to disadvantage our communities and in fact bankrupting those communities?

I think this bill needs to be reconsidered. Hopefully, they'll have public hearings on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

I'll return to the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments. Just to reiterate: We do need in this province, as a number of environmental and manufacturing organizations have pointed out, some legislation which speaks to the present and future in terms of the reduction of toxic substances in our everyday lives.

But this legislation simply doesn't do it. This is legislation with a fancy title that doesn't do much. In fact, as I indicated in my comments earlier, it may actually do some damage, because it doesn't set out what clearly is required. It doesn't set out what it applies to. It doesn't set out what the objectives, timelines and targets are.

This is a majority government. It's not a majority government that is in the habit of listening, but on this particular bill I would hope that the government—it really has two choices here. It can go forward to committee and listen to what the people of Ontario have to say, including what has been said here today and in other parts of the debate, and come forward with amendments so that it

brings some specificity to the legislation. That's one option for them. Or the government can withdraw the bill, start again and present a bill that actually has some meat in the sandwich. I guess we'll see.

If the government decides to proceed, I would hope this goes out for lengthy, lengthy public hearings so that we have an opportunity to present some amendments that will really put some meat and some substance in the bill, and some clarity and transparency, so that people will know what is required and when it's required.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

Orders of the day. Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we have no further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): As such, this House is in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1000 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of guests?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. It's not a guest; it's actually page Robyn's 14th birthday today.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Today, page Lindsay Eenkooren of Baden is serving as page captain, and I'm thrilled to be able to introduce Lindsay's family. They're here with us today in the east gallery. Lindsay's father, Dave Eenkooren, and her mother, Sharon Eenkooren, are with us here today. We have Lindsay's grandfather Duke Eenkooren and Lindsay's grandmother Annie Eenkooren. We have Lindsay's grandmother Marg Weber, Lindsay's aunt Carol Brosowski and Lindsay's cousin Kristy Lynn Brosowski. We welcome you all to Queen's Park today.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Today is Ontario Museums at Queen's Park day, and representatives of the Ontario Museum Association, who will be meeting with me and other colleagues in the House, are here in the Legislature this morning. So I would like to welcome all the

representatives of the Ontario Museum Association who are joining us to watch question period. Joining us today are Marie Lalonde, Tammy Adkin and Gilles Séguin. Bienvenue. C'est un grand plaisir de vous accueillir.

Mr. Paul Miller: Today is museum day at the Legislature. I'd like to welcome, from the Hamilton area, Ian Kerr-Wilson, who is the manager of museums for the city of Hamilton; also, David Adames, executive director of Tourism Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from York Centre and page Michael Webster we'd like to welcome his mother, Beth Webster, sitting in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My first question is for the Premier. When I was told this morning that yesterday the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced that your government is getting into the business of picking winners and losers in our economy, I said, "His speech must have been approved by the Premier's office." Premier, was that the case, or was Minister Bryant freelancing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take this opportunity to commend my Minister of Economic Development and Trade for the fabulous work he's been doing on behalf of all Ontarians and to strengthen our economy.

It's no secret that we have, from the outset, been very strategic in terms of how we deployed our resources. There are certain kinds of sectors that we think hold more promise than others for strengthening our economy and creating more jobs. In supplementaries, I'll speak to some of those specific sectors which we think are worthy of our combined support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Over the past number of weeks, we've been hearing about the Premier saying one thing to his caucus while one of his ministers is caught stepping out on him and doing something entirely different. First it was the Minister of Finance doing his massive tax grab behind the backs of your members and the constituents they supposedly represent, and now it's the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Maybe we should call him Czar Michael.

If this is really your policy, what makes you qualified to pick winners and losers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's important that we have this opportunity to speak to that, because it speaks to the policy we've had in place for some time now. I believe, and I think my honourable colleague would agree with this, that the days when governments anywhere quietly preside over the gradual evolution of the economy and just sit on their hands are behind us.

One of the things that my Minister of International Trade, Minister Papatello, would tell you is that when we deal with international investment opportunities, they're always asking the same kind of question: "What specifically will your government do for us? In Tennessee, they'll do this for us. In Germany, they'll do this for us. In Finland, they'll do this for us." We can't possibly satisfy all of those concerns, but what we can do is then focus to specific sectors. We've done that. Digital media, for example; advanced life sciences; green technologies; auto—those are our strengths and we'll continue to build on those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We know the Soviet Union also had a five-point plan and their government picked winners and losers. We know how that turned out.

If we look at the McGuinty government's track record and the success of their five-point plan, we should all be alarmed about a decision by this government to pick winners and losers. This is the gang who brought Ontario to have-not status for the first time in its history. This is a government that made nine announcements about the Next Generation of Jobs Fund and we still have a billion dollars sitting in the bank. I could go on and on citing mismanagement by this government.

I ask again: Why, Premier, do you believe you and your gang who can't shoot straight are more qualified to make the right investment choices than the marketplace?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the things that we do on a continual basis is we work with economists and the business sector to ensure that we are placing our focus on those areas which hold the greatest promise for Ontario's economy and for new job creation. So that we can take it away from the abstract to a little bit more specific, let me tell you about some of the things we've invested in. Agfa HealthCare: We're co-investing there in a business which is developing software for sharing X-rays and scans over a regional network. Cyclone Manufacturing makes lighter, more fuel-efficient parts for aircrafts to lower costs for airlines and reduce emissions. Honeywell Mississauga invests in aerospace manufacturing. 2Source Manufacturing develops and manufactures new types of aircraft bushings—and by the way, we're known all around the world for that particular product. These are good examples of investments that represent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier again: Yesterday's Toronto Star had this to say about the McGuinty sales tax: "Even though Liberal MPPs and cabinet ministers privately share Runciman's concern about the change, the Premier insists it is full-steam ahead...."

Premier, is that why you have dropped the code of silence on your backbenchers—because you're afraid

they agree with our party's proposals to reduce the damage your massive tax grab is going to wreak on Ontarians? Is that why you've silenced them to such an extent that the only thing that comes out of them during debate is tripe that has been fed by your unelected political advisers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We think it's really important that as a province we rise to the occasion and deal with this global recession, and we think we have a specific responsibility to demonstrate some sound leadership in this regard.

Ontarians are asking, I think, a pretty simple question, which is, "What do we need to do in these circumstances?"

We think the single most important thing that we can do to deal with this recession, to strengthen this economy and create more jobs is to move ahead with this comprehensive tax reform. We think that's important. We've agreed to that as a government, we've agreed to that as a caucus, and now what we're going to do is ensure that we find opportunities to speak to Ontarians so they better understand why we have to do this and they understand the upsides to this, which are more jobs, a stronger economy, and more wealth to support our schools, our hospitals and supports for the vulnerable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The report that was released yesterday on the residential housing industry confirmed concerns that we've been bringing forward and, as per your direction, those concerns are being ignored by your backbenchers. This was an independent, third party report from an industry and consumer advocate. Up to 21,200 jobs may be lost as a direct result of this new tax. It's going to cost individual Ontarians thousands of dollars to fix up their home or close the sale on a home or resale.

Premier, in the 2003 election campaign, you said, "We're going to make sure that MPPs are free to do their jobs, which is to represent the views of their constituents." Are you saying today that your MPPs, just like you, think the only way to get out of recession is taking more money out of the pockets of already hard-hit Ontarians? Is that your answer?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We believe that it's really important that we take certain steps to move forward to confront the recession as it presents itself in our province. Again, as I say, I think the single most important thing for us to do is to move ahead with this package of comprehensive tax reforms.

When it comes to the housing sector in particular, we've tried to be as fair as we possibly can. Now, I'd like to believe, as my honourable friend insinuates, that somehow there's an easy, magical way out of this which causes no disruption and no anxiety and no change of any kind, but that world doesn't exist. We live in this one; it's the real world. But what we have done is we've found a way to ensure that 93% of home sales will remain entirely unaffected by this new single sales tax—93%. I

think that's a pretty significant benefit to Ontario families, but if you are buying a house that's over half a million dollars, there will be the full application of the single sales tax. We have tried to be as fair as we can and preserve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Premier, in opposition you swore up and down that your backbenchers would be able to represent the views of their constituents. What you didn't say was that your unelected henchmen would make sure backbenchers only get to speak their minds in private or off the record. What you didn't mention were the gag orders, the marching orders and the climate of fear.

Yesterday, the members for Huron-Bruce, Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Willowdale, Ottawa Centre, and Mississauga South all ignored the concerns of their constituents and supported your massive tax grab. Premier, why are you muzzling your backbenchers? Why are you going against everything you stood for as a member of the opposition?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've had the privilege to serve Ontarians as the Premier for some five years now, and one of the greatest blessings that I enjoy, apart from the fact that I live here in Ontario, in Canada, is I've been blessed with the strongest caucus that has ever graced the government benches, ever. We work as hard as we can to ensure that any policies that we put forward represent the distilled wisdom of the entire government caucus. I'm honoured to lead this caucus, and I'm honoured to put forward the budget on behalf of the government caucus.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Obama administration unveiled changes to American corporate tax rules. Essentially, the changes discourage American subsidiaries in countries such as Canada from investing on the basis of low local corporate tax rates. So my question to the Premier is a simple one: Can the Premier explain what these changes mean for Ontario in light of his \$4.5-billion corporate tax giveaway?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's difficult to discern what the member is referring to. What I can say is this: The Obama administration is targeting certain loopholes, as I understand it, that are aimed at tax havens. Those havens provide an unfair advantage to those islands, those jurisdictions, against production within the United States.

What we've done is lowered corporate taxes and personal taxes to attract new investment to Ontario. When our tax policy is fully implemented, our corporate tax rates will be lower than Michigan, lower than Ohio, lower than Indiana, lower than California, lower than New York—lower than the 50 American states. And yet we will continue to invest in health care and education, we will continue to afford the best—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Kenora will come to order, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The finance minister might not have read it, and the Premier might not have read it, but I've read it and I'm going to help them all out. What the changes mean is that some of your government's \$4.5-billion corporate tax giveaway is going to end up in the hands of the US Treasury, further reducing the incentive for American-based companies to invest in Ontario.

I want to know, why is this government giving up much-needed corporate tax revenue in this province when it will do nothing to create jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We're not. What the member doesn't understand is that we don't have a tax code like the United States does. The member is trying to insinuate that we could take steps similar to President Obama's. The fact is we can't. We don't have that type of tax code; we don't have the kinds of loopholes that were created.

What we can say is this: A comprehensive tax reform package that lowers personal taxes and that creates a fair and more efficient tax system will lower the price of our exports and create jobs. What we can also say is that by increasing the Ontario child benefit, we can help those on the low end of the income spectrum come out of that end of the spectrum and get Ontario to move forward in the future. This government has laid out a plan. It's the right plan. I wish the member opposite would support it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's the government's logic: It is shovelling \$4.5 billion out the door to companies that don't need it, just as the Obama administration signals to the entire world that the era of racing to the bottom when it comes to corporate tax rates is over forever.

Why is this government pursuing a wrong-headed, grossly incompetent economic policy, when our largest trading partner is going in precisely the opposite direction?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In addition to the tax policies we've laid out, we are also increasing the minimum wage and increasing our investments in health care and education. I think the other part of the President's announcement that the member missed was that he's creating tax incentives within the United States, as I understand the package.

What I think is important is to have a balanced package of reforms, a competitive tax structure—a tax structure that's competitive on the personal side for those of more modest incomes and a tax package that's competitive in terms of being able to attract the kinds of investments we're going to need to move forward in a bigger, better and stronger fashion in the future.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the economic development minister

made a major speech about picking winners and losers. At the same time, the TTC has chosen Bombardier for a \$1.3-billion contract to deliver 204 new streetcars. That means hundreds of new, good-paying jobs at Bombardier's Thunder Bay plant, but this government refuses to commit funding.

Can the Premier tell us: In your economic game, are the hundreds of workers in Thunder Bay, and thousands more in parts plants across Ontario, winners, or are they losers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As my honourable colleague knows, we've recently committed close to \$9 billion, I think, in new investment for public transit in the greater Toronto area, moving all the way into Hamilton. Obviously, we want to do everything we can to ensure that those dollars are spent, as much as possible, within the province of Ontario, including for new cars for the transit system.

This particular subject which my colleague raises, the recent announcement from the city of Toronto, is the subject of an ongoing conversation with our government. We have limited resources, and we just want to ascertain that we have the same shared priorities before we can commit to specific projects, as the city of Toronto would invite us to do at this point in time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's only one thing blocking the Bombardier deal: this government's refusal to put its one-third share on the table. The economic development minister says that Ontario is coming to the table with billions and billions of dollars and is going to pick winners and losers.

Why is this government making Bombardier workers the losers in its game of economic Darwinism?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague that her party stood steadfast in opposition to the expansion of the York subway line. I recall speaking to workers at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay at the time, and they were very unhappy with that particular decision.

1050

The good news is that we have found a way to invest billions and billions of dollars in new public transit that will benefit the community of the greater Toronto area and Hamilton.

I commit to my colleague, as I have to Ontarians, that we will do everything we possibly can to ensure that we benefit the Ontario economy and Ontario workers through those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier makes it seem simple, as if picking winners and losers is just a game where the strong survive and the weak perish. We're talking about real people here, workers with families. When is this government going to quit playing games with people's lives? When is it going to stop trotting out ministers to make insulting speeches and get on with

protecting and creating jobs, so that all Ontarians can win and prosper?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand that it's in my honourable colleague's interest to push us over to the right and create the impression that somehow that's all we do.

I want to draw Ontarians' attention once again to the balanced nature of our budget. In addition to reducing taxes for people and businesses, we're also investing in the Ontario child benefit and nearly doubling that. We are investing in social housing. We are increasing the minimum wage. We have found a way, notwithstanding the contraction of this economy, to invest new monies in health care, schools, colleges and universities, protections for the environment and the like. When Ontarians take a look at the whole package, they'll see that in fact it's very, very balanced.

TOBACCO INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Your government declared war on tobacco. Your government has eliminated virtually every tobacco farmer in the province of Ontario. Last year was the last crop, yet last week we learned of a 33% increase in smoking in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN catchment area.

Minister, you eliminated all your tobacco farmers, yet smoking went up 33%. Will you please explain to this House how this tobacco policy blunder occurred?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would suggest that the honourable member should review his question. I'm really at a loss to understand the action this government has taken that would have created the result he has indicated.

I do know that the federal government had established a program, and it did incent tobacco farmers to relinquish their quota, and when they would do so, they would also commit not to farm tobacco in the future. That was a program that was introduced by the federal government, funded solely by the federal government. The honourable member pressed this government to participate in that. Our government has been steadfast in our commitment that any kind of exit strategy for the tobacco industry would be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, you never call, you never write. How else can I get your attention?

You have yet to announce your Ontario government's traditional 40% share of the tobacco transition program. As you said, the federal government came through for tobacco families. You said you would be part of a federally led program. These are your Ontario tobacco farmers. You are the Ontario agriculture minister. I feel you have an obligation to lend a hand.

Minister, would you be looking at any residual monies from this 2008-09 budget? When will tobacco country see some cheques from the Ontario government?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The honourable member has, in his second question, reversed himself. In the first question, he asked what this government has done to create the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I would like to hear the minister's answer, and I'm sure the honourable member who asked the question would like to hear the answer. Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: In the first question, the honourable member asked why our government did what we did to the tobacco industry. In the supplementary, he's asking when we are going to do something to help with the exit of farmers from the tobacco industry. On one hand, he's blaming us for doing something, and in the supplementary, he's indicating we've done nothing and when will we do so.

What I have said to the people of Ontario, what I have said to tobacco producers each and every time they have contacted me, any time the member has asked—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member from Lanark, please withdraw that comment. Stand. Ten seconds.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: —tobacco industry very clearly. We believe an exit strategy should be funded by the users and not the taxpayers of Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. In Bill 162, the government has made it clear that it has no legal obligation to provide financial assistance to the province's pension benefits guarantee fund. To date, the government has provided a zero-interest, long-term repayable loan whenever the PBGF has insufficient funds to protect Ontario pensions. Why is this government changing the rules and backing away from the fund precisely when pensions are most at risk?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would invite the member opposite to read the legislation and the amendments that give the government considerable flexibility to provide loans and/or grants to pension funds. But I don't want to underestimate the magnitude of the challenge. In the case of Stelco, we provided about \$150 million. The member and his party voted against helping those Hamilton pensioners, I might add.

In the case of General Motors, you're looking at \$3.5 billion. You're looking at a range of other challenging situations that will make it difficult for this House, and make it difficult to respond in the way I think we all want to. The important challenge is to keep those businesses operating, to keep them profitable and ensure that we don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, they're really booming: They are closed down.

The practice up until now has been that the province has always stood behind the fund. Now the government has introduced new provisions in Bill 162 that explicitly say that it has no—no, I repeat—obligation under any circumstances to make any loans or grants to the fund. The Premier has made it clear that the government won't provide the same sort of assistance it has in the past.

When will this government commit to standing behind the pension benefits guarantee fund, as we know it's going to put at risk the pensions of tens of thousands of Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, as I said some weeks ago, we have to have an honest discussion about the fact that this fund, the pension—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite is right: It will be a novelty. This fund has not been properly managed or funded since 1981. In fact, previous governments have done things like introduce the "too big to fail" clause which effectively exempted the largest pensions in the province from contributing.

We have to be fair to all Ontarians, those who have a pension plan and the 70% of us who don't. I suggest to the member that he have a broader look at the whole question of pension adequacy, along with us and the federal government, to ensure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

HOURS OF WORK

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Labour and deals with the protection of vulnerable workers.

For far too long, past governments have ignored them. We're a government that supports vulnerable workers. In my opinion, one of the government's best decisions on this front was to end the 60-hour workweek early in 2005. Members of my riding of Essex are supportive of this initiative that protects vulnerable workers and supports a healthier work environment for all Ontarians.

I'm concerned by the recent talk in the PC leadership campaigns and their lack of support for vulnerable workers. Many of my constituents enjoy spending time with their families, their children and their grandchildren. We've made it possible for employees to make free and informed decisions about whether they want to work longer hours.

1100

For the benefit of the House and all vulnerable workers, would the minister lay out for us exactly some of the benefits we have initiated for the protection of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I would like to thank the member for Essex, and I couldn't agree with him more. I also want to recognize my colleague from London West, who introduced the legislation on behalf of the McGuinty government that ended the 60-hour workweek. When we

passed that legislation, we gave employees a genuine choice about working excess hours while preserving flexibility for businesses.

What is wrong with allowing employees to determine whether they wish to work more than 48 hours in a week? Employees deserve that right to make a free and informed decision, whether they choose to work longer hours or use those hours for better work-life balance.

Let's be clear: Proposals to repeal this legislation will not help employees. Members of the official opposition are suggesting that we turn back the clock. We want to move forward. We don't want to go back to the Harris-Eves style of government that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: As the old saying goes, there are only so many hours in a day, and Ontarians are concerned about their jobs and creating that balance between working and spending time with their families. We know now more than ever that people are working longer hours and spending more time commuting to and from work. All of this takes away from time spent with one's children, a partner or family and friends.

I'm proud of the work our government has done to protect vulnerable workers and provide a choice when it comes to how an employee chooses to work. Could the minister please clarify for the members of the House the importance of this legislation.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The system is simple. The employee consents in writing to his or her employer to work up to 60 hours in a workweek, and the agreement is submitted to the Ministry of Labour for review and approval. The worker is then compensated, if he works over those hours, at time and a half per hour. Employees deserve choice again. Our government believes that working Ontarians should have a say in extended hours of work.

Our government has also removed the ability of employers to force employees to retire at age 65. Along with this employee choice, this government is dedicated to the health and safety of all working Ontarians. Our number one priority is to ensure that they come home after work safe and sound. We believe in strong protections for vulnerable workers, and eliminating the 60-hour workweek is a key element of providing those protections.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Bill 132 was promised swift passage by your House leader, and yet it collects dust in some black hole down here while the sheriffs are off to the Countryman's Estate Winery. While \$400,000 worth of wine sits in casks, you personally prevent Countryman's access to the marketplace that Bill 132 provides. They won't be here for the Speaker's fruit wine reception, but I'll be at their winery on Thursday as they announce their bankruptcy—more lost jobs, more lost industry, fewer local producers and a

continuation of the long, dark streak of Liberal misery throughout Ontario.

Everyone likes Bill 132 and the fruit wine it represents. I do, the industry does, the Speaker, your caucus. Why don't you like it, and why haven't you passed it?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The honourable member identified Countryman's, wonderful fruit wine producers in eastern Ontario. I've had the opportunity to meet with them in my constituency office and I've had the opportunity to sample their wonderful fruit wine.

Our government has, I believe, a very solid record of working with the wine industry. Also, we have been very open to discussing the issues with fruit wine operators. They have presented the notion of the possibility of having fruit wines sold in farmers' markets. This is a new idea, something that we are considering. We are prepared to work with the industry about that.

Interjections.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I hear members from the opposition who are criticizing the actions we have taken so far to work with our partners, but I would remind them that when they were in government for eight years, they did nothing for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: The bill sits in purgatory as Countryman's finds itself in bankruptcy hell. Your government has one record: broken promises, longer unemployment lines, more tax grabs and have-not status. On Thursday, Countryman's winery will file for bankruptcy. In his words, "Government will not allow my business access to the marketplace."

Bill 132 allows the sale of fruit wine at our markets. Their fruit wines can't get to farmers' markets because that bill sits in purgatory. Countryman's and this entire industry have been hogtied by you for too long.

Dear Minister, if you will not listen to your caucus or the industry, then listen to me and listen to your conscience. Pass Bill 132 and get Countryman's to market. Will you do that?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: As I indicated to the honourable member, we certainly value the contribution the fruit wineries have for rural economies right across Ontario. Fruit wine producers do have the opportunity to sell their product at the farm gate within their community. The conversations that we have had with fruit wine producers in Ontario are that they are looking for opportunities to expand access to fruit wine products, and they have brought us the idea of placing fruit wines in farmers' markets. This is an idea that I'm really very interested in. You know that it does require some collaboration with my ministry as well as other ministries.

I would say to the honourable member in whose name the piece of legislation, the proposed legislation, stands, he did nothing for eight years on this file, and he now comes to this Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Yesterday, a conference in Thunder Bay revealed a shocking statistic: Up to 10% of Ontario seniors face abuse. Tammy Rankin, an expert on elder abuse in nursing homes, said, "We need to talk about (elder abuse) and make sure politicians are aware of the problem.... People don't realize how often it occurs and the impact it has on the elderly."

Quite simply, Ontario is falling short by allowing 10% of our seniors to fall victim to abuse. Will this minister explain why the government is abandoning so many of our Ontario seniors?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: This government is doing anything but abandoning our seniors. We are acutely aware of the issues that surround elder abuse. We understand very well the statistics that are involved. We understand extremely well that many seniors do not come forward for fear of embarrassment.

Interjection.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: What do we do about it? I'd like to share with the honourable member an announcement, if he would listen. Just two weeks ago, I announced that our government is investing \$400,000 through the Ontario Trillium Foundation to set up a helpline—24 hours a day, seven days a week and in 154 languages, which is the face of elders in this province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That's all we need, another bureaucratic level.

The fact is that this government has failed to take the actions necessary to protect seniors. Our long-term-care facilities continue to be understaffed and are far from meeting adequate minimum care: 3.5 hours a day, hands-on. Retirement homes continue to be unregulated facilities, lacking the standards needed to protect seniors. This government has continually undermined the pensions of seniors, leaving them financially vulnerable in their time of need. Will the minister commit to undoing these wrongs today and begin protecting Ontario seniors, not just creating a phone line?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: There are many different initiatives under way that have taken place within the budget, within the Ministry of Health and within my portfolio to address exactly the question.

Interjection.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'd be delighted to tell you about it, but it's hard when you're talking at the same time.

In the last four years, this government has invested \$6 million on our elder abuse strategy. In the budget, changes were made to allow seniors, in the face of these difficult economic times—instead of 25%, it was brought up to 50%—the ability to reach into RRSPs so they are able to address some of the pressures that are on them. When it comes to the matters that are being looked at within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, if we have the opportunity of a third question of this calibre,

my honourable member from the Ministry of Health will address that.

1110

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This week is Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario. We know that as many as one in five children struggle with mental health issues at some point in their young lives. Whether it's depression, anxiety or bullying, they need support to get through these difficult times. I've heard from parents in my riding of Hamilton Mountain whose children have faced enormous challenges. In fact, I know that this is an issue that concerns many Hamiltonians. For example, a recent series by Denise Davy in the Hamilton Spectator focused on the difficulties faced by families in Ontario and across Canada as they navigate the system for their children. Can the minister please outline Ontario's plan to improve mental health services for children and what steps we are taking to implement it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very pleased to recognize Children's Mental Health Week. I want to take this opportunity to commend the mental health workers, the parents, and most of all, the kids themselves who are persevering through enormous challenges. I also want to take a moment to thank Denise Davy for the work she has done with the Hamilton Spectator to raise the awareness of issues around mental health.

But I am happy to set the record straight. Ontario does have a plan to improve children and youth mental health services. We released that plan in 2006; it's called "A Shared Responsibility." It's a plan that was developed after extensive consultation to improve services, accountability and coordination. We're moving ahead with the implementation of this plan. We have not been ignoring this sector the way the other parties did when they were in government. We have invested over \$60 million since coming to office to support children and youth with mental health challenges.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I know parents in my riding will be glad to hear that Ontario has a plan to improve children's mental health services and that work is being done to make the system easier to navigate. However, I hear that supports for children and youth with mental health challenges need to be better coordinated. For example, there needs to be a continuum of services that include supports in schools, communities and hospitals. We must do this to ensure that no matter where a child or youth lives, or how severe their challenges are, they get the help that they need. Can the minister please tell this House how she's working with other ministries to ensure that there is an approach that goes beyond government silos?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to supporting children and youth with mental health challenges, it is absolutely essential that we work across government.

That's why my ministry has worked very closely with the Ministry of Education to develop the student support leadership initiative. It's a program that brings together school boards and children's mental health agencies so that teachers and mental health workers are better connected.

I'm very happy that my colleague the Minister of Health has placed a high priority on mental health and has struck an experts' advisory committee that includes representatives from Children's Mental Health Ontario. We also welcome the work that the Select Committee on Mental Health will be doing, and I look forward to presenting at that committee next month. Tomorrow night, I will be in Hamilton, and I will be joined by my colleague at a forum hosted by the Hamilton Spectator. I look forward to hearing directly from parents of children with mental health challenges. What I can tell you is that we will continue to work together. We need every child—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Frank Klees: This question is to the Premier. I was in Thunder Bay for the last two days, and at every meeting that I attended with representatives of local business and local government and individuals, the topic of discussion, top of mind, was the lack of leadership on the part of this government when it comes to the economic welfare of northern Ontario. The latest blow came when the Premier and his Minister of Infrastructure refused to support the TTC's announcement that it had selected Thunder Bay's Bombardier to construct 204 streetcars. That's a contract that's worth more than \$1.2 billion and would guarantee hundreds of jobs in Thunder Bay.

Will the Premier today remove all doubt and commit his support to ensuring that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm pleased to say to the honourable member that later on today, with our Thunder Bay caucus colleagues, I'll be meeting with Mayor Lynn Peterson, the mayor of Thunder Bay, and someone who is very well-known to me. We'll certainly look forward to the opportunity to have a conversation about that community's infrastructure priorities, not to mention the opportunities with respect to Bombardier gaining a greater order book with respect to transit procurement here in Toronto.

To remind the honourable member, our government recently made a commitment for \$9-billion worth of transit infrastructure in the greater Toronto area, which in and of itself will influence additional procurement. With respect to the matter in the city of Toronto, we've said that it's important for them to establish what their priorities are, as there had been a wide variety of things

spoken about. We will work, as we have been, with the city of Toronto and the federal government to try to find resources to make sure that this procurement moves forward, as it was already announced by the city of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: It's precisely that kind of rhetoric that concerns the people of Thunder Bay. There is a very specific contract that the TTC has awarded. It is worth \$1.2 billion and hundreds of jobs. This is an opportunity for this government to take decisive action. It's not about more rhetoric; it's about whether or not this government will stand up with their Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who has said that he's very excited about this.

Why can't the Premier and the Minister of Infrastructure get as excited about this as their colleague, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and stand up for the people of northern Ontario and let them know today that these jobs are secure and that the government of Ontario will stand behind this contract? Will he do that today?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do think that the honourable member, who has both the experience in this Legislature—a former member of a government who witnessed his own government filling in a concrete hole, the tunnel that had been under construction for new transit infrastructure, albeit along Eglinton Avenue, where we've committed to it. I think he's standing on rather flimsy ground.

The member also mentions that the party in question has already entered into a contract related to the procurement. We think it's important that Toronto be prepared to invest in the revitalization of its transit infrastructure alongside that of the province. We have \$9 billion committed. We want to be a partner with the city of Toronto in continuing to advance access to transit for Torontonians, but we think it's also important, before people in the public domain commit another level of government for resources which they know had not arrived at a level of commitment, that we proceed with some additional caution. That's why we're working with all parties involved—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, we now know that the dreaded HST will go down in history as one of the biggest tax grabs in the history of this country. Ontarians know that this government is attempting to bribe them with one-time payouts conveniently timed to just before the next election.

One of my constituents has written to me, and I promised to convey it to you today. She writes: "I am self-employed and know that for my business I will have more hassle and paperwork with the HST. I am against it and also against the tax grab it represents on gasoline, home heating fuel, water, hydro, used cars, government

and city services, any service for home or business, such as repairs, professional services of any kind etc. The \$1,000 will not amount to much after we pay all those bills. This is a tough time for myself and many others and this tax grab will hurt."

To the Premier: Why—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I disagree with the premise of the question. I have here the regulations for the GST and for the PST. There are two of them, and one of them will be gone in a year's time—it will be gone.

This budget is about a number of measures that will make our economy more competitive. It's not just about the single payment to assist consumers as we move to the new single sales tax. It's about permanent tax cuts for low-income Ontarians. It's about having the lowest first bracket in the country. It's about an Ontario child benefit that's the most generous in the country. It's about balance. It's about doing the right thing to ensure that Ontario grows as the economy comes out of this—

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I am dismayed at the response. The truth is, the vast majority of Ontarians will pay through the nose forever with this new tax.

Perhaps the government will pay attention to another letter I got from a resident of the Beach, who thinks the government will end up paying the ultimate price.

"I am greatly appalled at the Liberal government's recent announcement to harmonize the provincial sales tax with the GST.... How could your government think of introducing this tax when Ontarians are losing jobs and hurting financially? Just when I thought your government couldn't be any more misaligned with people they serve, you do this?... Do you think your token \$1,000 will actually go to anything that will prove to be beneficial to the poorer recipients?

"I used to be a Liberal supporter but I can't espouse the policies of this party anymore, provincially or federally."

My question: Will this government try to save itself and reverse the tax-grabbing HST scheme?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The NDP have always advocated for more well-paying jobs and this budget will create those.

Let me quote a few other noteworthy individuals who have commented on the budget.

Here is what Hugh Mackenzie, an economist and research associate for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, said: "Ontario's 2009-10 budget establishes the right direction for the next few years. It provides substantial economic stimulus. It is consistent with the new orthodoxy that relies heavily on governments to help rebuild damaged economies. It imposes some coherence on an incoherent federal plan. It increases support for

low-income families and individuals. It modernizes Ontario's consumption tax."

I'm with Hugh Mackenzie. I'm with the policy alternatives group. This is the right budget for the right time that will help people in Ontario of the lowest and most modest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. The Winter Olympic Games are 283 days away. Ontario's athletes will be competing at the highest levels. We need to support them so they can compete effectively. Investment in Ontario's athletes will help them succeed in what are incredibly competitive sporting events. We want our athletes to be on the Olympic and on the Paralympic podiums. We want our athletes to get their share of the medals.

Minister, how are you helping Ontario's athletes get to those winning podiums? What's the government doing to help our athletes turn in winning performances?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: First of all, I want to thank the member from Willowdale for his question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members may want to settle some of those issues outside of this chamber. We don't need them dealt with in here.

Minister?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It certainly is a privilege for me to stand in this House to talk about our Quest for Gold program that was recently announced by the McGuinty government. This year, we're in fact putting \$10 million in the Quest for Gold program. This will continue to support funding for our high-performance sport athletes in 2009-10.

Supporting Ontario's athletes is an important part of this government's plan to build sport in Ontario. That is why last year \$23.4 million was invested in sport across the province of Ontario.

Through our Quest for Gold program, our government provides support to Ontario's high-performance athletes and to our coaches in Ontario. This program is aimed to improve the performance and number of Ontario's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, Ontario's athletes inspire a culture of sport development in our communities. This encourages us all to lead healthy, active and sporting lives. Minister, this is good for everyone.

Athletes who accept funding are making a commitment to live and train in Ontario and compete for Ontario at the national and international level. To meet the goals set by Ontario of helping Canada win the most medals at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, our support for our athletes has to be effective. Minister, will you commit to continue the type of support the McGuinty government has provided in the past and continues to

provide to help these dedicated athletes win for Ontario and win for Canada?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today our Quest for Gold program has provided over \$32 million in financial support to high-performance athletes. This program aims to improve the performance and number of Ontario athletes competing at the national and international levels, and contributes to the performance of Canada at international competitions.

Twenty-nine per cent of the Canadian athletes who competed at the 2008 Beijing Olympics were recipients of the Quest for Gold Ontario athlete assistance program; 94 of the 137 Ontario athletes on Team Canada are Quest for Gold recipients; 16 individual Ontario athletes won medals at the 2008 Olympic summer games; and 13 of them are funded through the Ontario athlete assistance program. At the 2008 Paralympic games, 86% of Ontario athletes were recipients of the Quest for Gold.

We continue to support our athletes in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, a year ago your ministry said that Ontario's new, high-tech driver's licence would be available by the winter of 2008-09 and now your ministry says the licence won't be available on time. In fact, on April 29, Premier McGuinty was quoted as saying, "It's unfortunate that we haven't been able" to get it done.

We estimate that 92,000 cars and 22,000 trucks carrying \$650 million worth of products cross the Ontario-US border each day. Minister, could you possibly tell this House why the high-tech driver's licence won't be available on time in Ontario, by June 1?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, it will be. I want to tell the member that when you're establishing a system of this kind, you have to ensure it's foolproof. I know that you, as an opposition member, would be delighted if somehow, when we developed this system, there was a glitch that took place so you could—and you might do that yet. I shouldn't say that you might do that yet. You'll stand up and say, "I just found something wrong with it," or that there's something that's not as secure as you would like.

The government wanted to make sure it was completely secure, so it did the testing of the cards very carefully. It had to consult and comply with everything that homeland security in the United States wanted, and the Canadian border services and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. So we went through all of these steps to be very thorough, to have what's available for the people in Ontario in a truly enhanced security document.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: As has been oft quoted, you didn't get it done. Quite honestly, the article I'm looking at here says, "Border Licences Called a 'Botch-Up.'" It's

clear that you've mismanaged the project from the beginning. No one argues with the security issues that you mentioned. What we argue with is saying one thing and not delivering. You didn't get it done, and that's the truth here.

This is affecting the mobility of the economy of Ontario. Quite honestly, my sense is that—there are really a couple of questions here. Will you get this project done on time and on budget? That's the question. Are you on budget or on time, either one or both? Could you answer that question, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You in opposition have a definition of time and budget. I have seen no deviation from budget at all. We wanted to ensure that it was done properly. Your leader, my good friend Bob Runciman—I'm not supposed to use names—has always been a person in this House who has lectured governments from opposition or, when in government, lectured his colleagues to do things right, to take the proper time to do things right, and I agree with him. He has always been very good at that.

1130

I want to assure the member, first of all, that for people who want to fly, the alternative is of course the passport. There is a Nexus pass available, and we've made this available to the people of the province of Ontario.

I'm sure that today you will have people who will be making application in various parts of Ontario for this, and they'll have it very soon.

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le ministre des Transports.

People in my riding are worried about this government's latest plan for the Highway-69-to-17 Sudbury southwest bypass. Your plan presently shows two flyover crossings for Southview Drive and Fielding Road, which will virtually cut off access to 1,300 residents and about a hundred area businesses, with implications for school buses, emergency vehicles and property values, not to mention making the daily work commute that much more of a challenge.

My question is simple: Can the minister reassure my constituents that an interchange will be added to the existing plan for the Highway-69-to-17 southwest bypass at Fielding Road?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm very pleased—

Interruption.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm very pleased that I have an answer. Listen, I met with the mayor of the city of Sudbury at the insistence of the member for Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci. We had an excellent meeting. I've known Mayor Rodriguez from way back when he was in St. Catharines. He was a teacher in St. Catharines at that time.

There were representatives of city council there, the representatives of staff. I'll tell you, it was a fabulous meeting. When they left, they were very, very happy that

the Ministry of Transportation was listening very carefully to their proposals.

As well, I remember that there is an environmental assessment that takes place. With that environmental assessment, people have an opportunity to call for a bump-up. A bump-up allows for more detailed environmental assessment, in which we'll be able to take into account all of the concerns that people in the area might have about this particular matter. I assure you, we are giving—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was hopeful when I saw the piece of paper come, but I did not get an answer, so I'll ask again.

Firefighters, police officers and emergency medical services are all opposed to the actual plan. They want existing municipal roads to be linked to the new four-lane bypass.

The plan as it exists would be an awful blow to the businesses on Fielding Road, which has about a hundred acres, ripe for expansion, that would become virtually useless. Businesses and livelihoods depend on Fielding Road's access to the bypass to get the 1,300 families from the Mikkola subdivision to their shops. They would suffer also.

Given what is at stake, when can my constituents expect an answer from this minister on the building of an interchange on the Highway-69-to-17 southwest bypass at Fielding Road? Will we get an interchange at Fielding Road?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That is to be determined. Certainly, I've listened very carefully to my colleague from Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci, who represents the people in that specific area. I've listened to the mayor of the city of Sudbury and the representatives who are there. I've received letters in the mail from people. Not everybody is on the same wavelength; I understand that. There are going to be different opinions, because different scenarios would have different impacts on the community.

As a result of this meeting and as a result of the representations made by the member for Sudbury, the letters that have come in, the mayor of the city of Sudbury and all concerned, we are considering very seriously the option that they have provided to us.

I think that the kind of meeting that we had is exactly the kind of meeting that the mayor was looking for. We left with a friendly handshake, and we were just delighted that this kind of openness is available to the people of Sudbury.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, I ask this House to grant unanimous consent to the passage of Bill 132.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is requesting unanimous consent for the passing of Bill 132. Agreed? I heard a no.

Question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: People are trying out the Dalton tax-o-meter, and the results are not good. They have calculated how much the Dalton McGuinty HST tax grab is going to cost them and they can't afford it.

The Premier has received e-mails from these people. He knows how much it's going to take from their families and seniors who are struggling to make ends meet. He knows that they are asking him to scrap this tax, like the retired man who estimated that it will cost him \$18,000 over his lifetime; like the woman who has been unemployed for almost a year and estimates that it will cost her \$56,000; like the family who already can't afford to take their kids to the movies or restaurants and estimates that this tax will cost them over \$34,000. They are already using money from their line of credit to register their son for soccer. How does the Premier expect them to afford this tax? What expense would he like them to cut?

In the middle of a recession, how can a government implement a tax that would cost people, by their own estimates, \$46,000, \$78,000 and \$120,000 over their lifetime? All these people figured out how much the Dalton sales tax will cost them by using the HST calculator on my website. If you, Mr. Speaker, want to find out how much the tax grab will cost you and all people who are watching, go to www.erniehardemanmpp.com and try the calculator. Then join the PC caucus in telling Dalton McGuinty that Ontarians are struggling and they cannot afford this tax grab.

ART EXHIBITION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I recently attended an art exhibition, the Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement, at the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River. Its mission is to unveil an innovative program of teaching and learning Chinese ink painting created 40 years ago by Mr. Laurence Tam Chi-sing, a teacher at Wah Yan College in Kowloon, Hong Kong, further educated in the UK and Toronto.

For centuries, the traditional method of teaching to paint was done through the copying of the works of the teacher or the past masters. Inspired by his teacher, the great Chinese painter Lu Shoukun, who stressed creativity, Mr. Tam used basic mathematical principles such as the use of dots and geometric lines to help his students grasp the skill of manipulating the Chinese brush. More importantly, he promoted their learning power and creative ability.

These young students had no way of knowing that they were participating in a revolutionary experiment. This new approach has been recently endorsed by the Chinese education authorities and will be introduced to all teachers and schools.

This art exhibition has been travelling for two years and features many of his students' works. It moves to the University of Toronto from June 6 to June 19. I encourage everyone to take the time to visit, as it is an exhibition worth seeing.

I'd like to thank the Wah Yan College's alumni association for bringing this event to Toronto, and a special thanks to Mr. Tam for sharing his passion of teaching.

RANAE TENBRINKE

Mr. Toby Barrett: For many years, the Royal Canadian Legion has sponsored the Annual Literary and Poster Contest that's open to all Canadian schoolchildren. Dunnville resident Ranae tenBrinke took first prize at branch 142 in her hometown of Dunnville, then proceeded to take top honours at zone B1 and district B in the senior essay contest. Now, the 18-year-old has learned she's been named the provincial champion.

Ranae's essay, in her own words, "Pays tribute to the soldiers who fought in the past and to those who continue to fight in the present. It honours those who had the courage to overcome their fears and pay whatever price necessary for the vision of a strong and free nation. It is a thank you to those who died, those who lived to tell the stories and those the stories inspired. It is not only about remembrance, but it is also about recognition, appreciation and admiration."

The essay is broken into segments: sacrifice, time, fear, freedom, courage and remembrance. It's beautifully written, and Ranae's words are truly wise beyond her years.

Members of the Cayuga Legion—that's branch 159—are proud to be awarding Ranae with her provincial certificate and her medal on May 19. To Ranae, we all say congratulations on your big win and your words, and may others learn from the example you have set.

CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wanted to congratulate the condo owners association that we set up in Trinity-Spadina on April 22. We had about 100 people from the different condominiums represented; in fact, 40 of them. Forty per cent of my riding is made up of condominiums, which is huge when you consider the number. Of course, it has changed the riding quite a lot as a result of the new construction that has come in, mostly condominium-related.

I have to tell you, they came together to talk about establishing a condo owners association of Trinity-Spadina, in particular to give themselves a voice, a voice that will defend the interests of condominium owners and a voice that will defend them against the government, because they've been so unwilling—this Liberal govern-

ment—to change the Condominium Act to reflect condominiums and to reflect the fact that they have absolutely no voice. In fact, if there is a dispute, they've got to go to the court system to resolve a dispute between a condominium owner and a developer, a condo owner and a board or a condo owner and a property manager. They've got serious issues that they've got to deal with.

I congratulate them and the new president, Linda Pinizzotto. We expect great things to happen. We urge you to do the same in your riding.

CINCO DE MAYO

Mr. Mike Colle: Today is Cinco de Mayo. It's a celebration of the great history of the Mexican people, many of whom now live in Ontario. Cinco de Mayo commemorates the Battle of Puebla, which took place in 1862 on this day. Mexican soldiers defeated the French occupying forces that were invading Mexico City. This day honours their bravery and celebrates Mexico's triumph over imperialism. Celebrations include battle reenactments, military parades and festivals filled with food, music, mariachi bands and lots of celebration.

I'm certain that this year's celebrations come at a time when Mexico and its citizens need them most. In celebrating their culture, we must also think of the challenges that the people in Mexico are facing right now. Let us send our thoughts and prayers to those recovering from the flu and hope that this challenge will pass so that the country, the people of Mexico and their friends and relatives who live here in Canada and throughout North America will have a life of hope and a return to normalcy.

Also, I would like to wish the nearly 24,000 Ontarians of Mexican descent and thousands more of Latino background who celebrate this significant day a feliz Cinco de Mayo.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Minister of Education is demonstrating indifference to the repeated expressions of concern from hundreds of my constituents in the town of Halton Hills. On March 25, I received a letter from the chair of the Halton Catholic District School Board asking me to approach the minister to seek clarification on a school transportation funding issue. The very next day, I spoke to the minister and told her that the school board needed reassurance that their bus funding would not be cut if they continued to bus students from Georgetown South to Christ the King high school.

I continued to follow up with her over the following days, but because the minister refused to respond in a timely way, the board felt compelled to eliminate this bus route for hundreds of students, all in an effort to conform to heavy-handed ministry guidelines. If the minister could still give the board its requested funding assurances, I would hope that it would reconsider its decision to cancel the buses.

On Saturday, I attended an event at the Gardiner Public School in Georgetown. Julie Rossall, a parent of

two students at Georgetown District High School, approached me to say that she had little choice but to sell her house in Georgetown South and move closer to her children's school because of the Halton public board's pending bus service cancellation.

That is the hardship that parents are experiencing. I've received countless messages of concern. There is no public transit alternative for Georgetown students.

Let's be clear: The busing problem in Georgetown South originated in the Mowat Block, in the minister's office. The mayor of Halton Hills is asking to meet the minister to discuss this matter. I urge her to do so at her earliest convenience. She has the power to solve this problem, and in the interests of our students she should exercise that power.

1510

CONCERT IN THUNDER BAY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I rise today to congratulate the Rafiki Youth Choir, conductor Laurel Oger, pianists Derek Oger and Linda Block, the board of directors and all volunteers connected with the performance on Saturday, May 2, in Thunder Bay.

The Rafiki Youth Choir, the Kuumba Training Choir, the Alumni Ensemble and the Rafiki Youth Choir North Shore performed for two hours in beautiful St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Thunder Bay, thrilling the audience with their excellence.

In Swahili, "rafiki" means "friend" and "kuumba" means "creative."

Special guest Paul Jarman, educator and widely acclaimed composer and performing artist, was in attendance. Paul travelled 33 hours from Australia to be in Thunder Bay for a truly remarkable performance. The audience was thrilled to listen to the world premiere performance of *Running with a Dream*. This song was commissioned by the Rafiki Youth Choir and written by Paul Jarman about true Canadian hero Terry Fox. It was truly moving and inspiring.

I offer a further thank you to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church for having Rafiki rehearse and perform in such a beautiful place; to Delores Dickey for her generous support of the commissioned piece *Running with a Dream*; to the fundraising committee; to the parents, guardians and families that support this endeavour; and finally to the choristers, an amazing group of young men and women.

Rafiki is a credit and a gift to Thunder Bay and north-western Ontario. Again I offer thanks to them and Paul Jarman for a truly remarkable evening. I wish them well in their future endeavours, and good luck in St. John's, Newfoundland, as they participate in Festival 500 this summer.

TAXATION

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I would like to take this opportunity to clarify an issue that was brought up in the House last week by a member from the opposition. As

it's Education Week, I feel it is especially important that we strive to provide accurate information in this House.

It was stated in the House that the single sales tax will translate into a 13% sales tax hike on the purchase of farmland. The actual fact is that in general the single sales tax—an additional 8%, not 13%—would follow the same tax base and structure as the federal goods and services tax.

Under the GST, the sale of farmland is usually taxable. However, when a farmer sells farmland as part of the sale of a farming business to another farmer, both taxes will be reimbursed after completion of the necessary paperwork.

The sale by individuals of farmland that includes a place of residence is viewed as two separate sales. Under certain circumstances, GST would not apply to the sale of farmland, such as in the case of a sale to an individual related to the farmer who would use the land for farming purposes.

POVERTY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House to commend the McGuinty government's commitment to reducing poverty and ensuring that all Ontarians have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The McGuinty Liberals realize that to compete with the world's leading economies, we need all 13 million Ontarians to be at their best. Helping low-income families to reach higher is no longer just a moral imperative but an economic necessity.

We are helping these families, and all Ontarians, by doing the following: We have increased social assistance rates by 11% since 2003, after more than a decade of frozen rates. We're almost doubling the Ontario child benefit, up to \$1,100 a year per child, for low- and middle-income families, beginning in July 2009, two years ahead of schedule. We're investing again in new, affordable housing: \$622 million to match federal contributions, to build 4,500 new housing units, and rehabilitating 50,000 existing units. We're moving forward with a plan that, when fully implemented, will provide \$45 million annually to ensure that low-income Ontarians have access to quality dental care.

These investments in affordable housing, early childhood development and health care are all key aspects of the McGuinty government's efforts to help all Ontarians.

We recognize that there's more to do, and we'll continue to do the work that has to be done to ensure that all Ontarians have the tools they need to succeed.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 174

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke introduced Bill 174, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities.

An examination of this bill has shown that it is largely similar in all meaningful respects to another bill already fully dealt with by this House in this session. Both bills propose a mechanism and a calculating formula for some municipalities to receive equitable rebates of gasoline tax revenue for certain purposes, in comparison with other municipalities that receive such rebates for different purposes.

This earlier bill, Bill 38, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to the assistance that the Minister provides to municipalities, was also sponsored by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The member selected the bill as his ballot item for private members' public business, and Bill 38 was subsequently considered on May 1, 2008. The motion for second reading was lost on a recorded division that day.

The close similarity between the two bills has caused me to consider the provisions of standing order 52, which states: "No motion, or amendment, the subject-matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session." The principle behind this rule is that the House, having once in a session made its decision on a matter, should not again be asked, nor should it devote the time to, considering the same matter.

While the two bills differ slightly in the calculating formula proposed, this, in my opinion, does not rise to the status of being substantially different questions. The House has decided on this matter in principle on May 1 of last year, and it will not therefore be possible for the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to bring Bill 174 forward in the current session.

I am aware that the member's ballot item for private members' public business falls this Thursday. Given that the House waived the requirement for notice for this ballot item on April 22, the opportunity exists for the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to bring forward another matter to be considered this Thursday.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Am I allowed to respond to that, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thought you were rising on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay. Well, I guess I can't.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO LABOUR
MOBILITY ACT, 2009

LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2009
SUR LA MOBILITÉ
DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories / *Projet de loi 175, Loi visant à accroître la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre entre l'Ontario et les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. John Milloy: During ministerial statements.

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SURGE PROTECTOR ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'INSTALLATION DE PARASURTENSEURS RÉSIDENTIELS ET COMMERCIAUX DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings / *Projet de loi 176, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités à l'égard de l'installation de parasurtenseurs dans les nouveaux immeubles d'habitation et les nouveaux immeubles commerciaux.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Ce projet de loi a pour but d'éviter des dommages substantiels à l'équipement de résidences et de commerces lors de pannes d'électricité.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LABOUR MOBILITY MOBILITÉ DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased today to be introducing some very important legislation for Ontario's workers and employers and for our economy as a whole.

If I can beg the Legislature's indulgence, I'd like to recognize the many officials from my ministry who are here today, who have worked very hard not only on this legislation, but on the various negotiations that have gone on with other provinces. I'd like to thank them for their hard work.

The proposed Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009, would support full labour mobility in Ontario and allow people to work where they find opportunity. It would make it easier for certified workers to come to this province and begin to work without long delays. This is good news for Ontario. More workers would be free to move to find work where opportunities exist or where their skills are needed. Employers would have a broader pool of qualified candidates and enjoy a simpler process for hiring workers from other parts of Canada.

By introducing this legislation today, the McGuinty government is meeting a commitment made last July by all Premiers. Premiers, meeting as the Council of the Federation, agreed to amend the Agreement on Internal Trade to ensure that certified workers in professions and trades have full labour mobility across Canada. At that time, Premier McGuinty said that full labour mobility will help Ontario workers and industries succeed in a challenging economy by strengthening our competitiveness and productivity and removing artificial barriers to opportunity. He went on to say that our government aims to implement full labour mobility in Ontario, with only the most necessary exceptions. In January, the provinces, territories and the federal government all endorsed the amendments to the Agreement on Internal Trade, and today we are taking the next important step. We are proposing a bill which, if passed, will meet Ontario's obligations under this important initiative.

The proposed Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009, would establish a labour mobility code, which reflects the mobility requirements under the Agreement on Internal Trade. The code would govern how Ontario regulators, such as the College of Nurses of Ontario or Professional Engineers Ontario, deal with people already certified elsewhere in Canada.

Je suis fier de dire que l'Ontario est une des premières provinces à proposer une loi sur la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre, ce qui souligne l'engagement de notre gouvernement à faire en sorte que l'Ontario soit prêt à profiter des avantages résultant du fait d'attirer des travailleurs qualifiés à la province.

Grâce à l'Accord sur le commerce intérieur, les premiers ministres préparent le Canada pour l'avenir. À l'aide de cette loi proposée, notre gouvernement prépare l'Ontario pour l'avenir.

The growth of Ontario's labour force is expected to slow in coming years. Through to 2025, growth is projected at less than 1% each year, or about half the growth of the past 25 years. As a result, labour mobility will become more important in helping us meet the demand for workers with key skills.

Our proposed legislation would benefit about 80 regulatory authorities and 300 occupations, including the skilled trades. Doctors, dentists, architects, engineers, plumbers and mechanics are some of the professions that would benefit from rules that make it easier to live and work in Ontario.

We have worked, and will continue to work, with the regulatory authorities to ensure they understand their

obligations under the national agreement. We have consulted with them to identify barriers and ways they can be removed. These barriers include requiring workers from other provinces to have additional material training, testing, experience or assessment before being qualified to practise in Ontario. Sometimes these barriers have meant long delays in being certified for people who have moved to Ontario, ready to start a new life. At the same time, we have also recognized the important role regulatory authorities play in helping to ensure public health and safety and to provide consumer protection.

Our approach has been a balanced one. We have worked with our regulatory authorities to identify a small number of occupations where an exception to full labour mobility is important to protect the public. Ontario's exceptions are currently under consideration and will be published in the months ahead.

We have also talked to leaders in the skilled trades to help them understand labour mobility and what it means for them. However, the majority of our skilled trades workers already understand and enjoy the benefits of full labour mobility through the red seal program. The inter-provincial standards red seal program sets common occupational standards across Canada for the skilled trades. These standards are developed and endorsed by industry. Workers with the red seal can work wherever their skills are needed. They are highly employable because employers know that they have the skills and knowledge to get the job done. Ninety per cent of all registered apprentices in Canada and 75% of registered apprentices in Ontario work in the red seal trades. The red seal is highlighted as a model for labour mobility in the Agreement on Internal Trade, and our commitment to the program is clear in the legislation that has been introduced today. Workers with the red seal will continue to enjoy full labour mobility. For those workers in non-red seal trades, we are working with other provinces to match trades. Certified workers in trades that have been matched across jurisdictions will also be entitled to full labour mobility.

I want to highlight another important element of our proposed act. Once a worker is certified in one jurisdiction in Canada, they will be able to be certified in the same occupation in other jurisdictions in Canada, allowing them to move freely across the country, and it doesn't matter if they were Canadian-trained or internationally trained workers. This is good news for qualified internationally trained workers.

Governments across Canada are taking these obligations seriously. Recent changes to the Agreement on Internal Trade also include penalties which can be imposed on a province or territory for non-compliance. Jurisdictions that don't change their rules to improve labour mobility face strong enforcement measures, including penalties ranging from up to \$250,000 for the smallest provinces and territories to up to \$5 million for the largest.

Let me underline again, our government is committed to labour mobility. Ontario is currently negotiating an

economic partnership agreement with Quebec to eliminate trade barriers and improve labour mobility between the provinces. This proposed agreement is consistent with the AIT and reflects the high level of commitment that both Ontario and Quebec share to ensuring full labour mobility.

In conclusion, I want to repeat that the proposed Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009, is good news for Ontario. Full labour mobility will strengthen our productivity and competitiveness, it will help us to meet changing labour market needs in the future, and importantly, it supports the right of all Canadians to live and work where they want in this country.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Today I rise in the House to mark the 14th annual Emergency Preparedness Week, which runs from May 3 to 9 across Canada.

Emergency Preparedness Week is a joint initiative sponsored by the federal government, the provinces, the territories and our municipal, NGO and private sector partners. Its purpose is to raise public awareness of the importance of being better prepared for an emergency. That's why this year's focus is on family preparedness.

1530

As we have seen in Ontario over the past several years, emergencies can happen at any time, whether they are natural or non-natural, such as technological failure or acts of terrorism.

When emergencies occur, being prepared is critical, and every Ontario household should have an emergency plan and survival kit to get the family through the first 72 hours of a crisis, when emergency response resources may be stretched thin. Yet, sadly, only 12% of Ontario households are prepared with an emergency survival kit and only 10% have an emergency plan. By taking time now to prepare emergency supplies, Ontarians can provide for their families and free up emergency responders to focus on those in greater need, such as hospital patients and seniors.

Family emergency planning should include every need of the household, including infants, people with disabilities or special needs, and pets. Our Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs is now available in seven languages and in Braille. Tips on preparing an emergency plan for every family member, including your pets, and how to assemble a survival kit are available on Emergency Management Ontario's website, at www.ontario.ca/beprepared.

It's not only households that must be prepared. Businesses need to have emergency plans as well for the safety of employees and the continuity of their operations. I encourage schools, businesses, service groups and members of this Legislature to use Emergency Preparedness Week to take stock of how prepared you and your families are to confront an emergency situation and to make sure you've got your own emergency plan and survival kit.

This government has made significant strides in making Ontario safer and able to respond to emergencies. Just last November, the province participated in Exercise Trillium Response in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, the largest emergency management exercise in recent memory. During this exercise, Ontario's ability to prepare for an emergency plan was put to the test by a simulated ice storm in the northwest, similar in scope to the real ice storm that devastated eastern Ontario and Quebec in 1998. It allowed us to examine the province's ability to support municipalities in a large-scale disaster and to coordinate our response with federal, municipal and other partners. I am pleased to report to the House that the lessons learned from this exercise will help improve the province's emergency management capability.

A year ago, we instituted and introduced the Red Alert partnership, which enables print media, local radio and television stations to interrupt programming to broadcast a red alert within minutes of Emergency Management Ontario being notified of an emergency. Red alerts include messages informing people about the nature of the impending emergency and what, if any, measures they should take to protect their families.

Last year, we also announced the Supply Chain and Logistics Coordination Alliance, a partnership between the province and more than 40 private and public sector partners. This network is the first of its kind in Canada and a leader in North America. The alliance will help to coordinate the purchase, transportation and distribution of food, water, oil, gas, telecommunications, emergency supplies and so much more across the province to where they are needed during an emergency.

I also remind members of the Legislature of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act passed by this government, which gives Ontario the most comprehensive emergency management legislation in North America. Part of this legislation requires all Ontario municipalities to have an up-to-date emergency response plan, and we will continue to work with communities in their efforts to protect their residents.

In closing, today I ask all members of this House to promote greater awareness in their ridings of the need to be prepared.

ASIAN AND SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Michael Chan: The month of May is officially recognized as both Asian and South Asian Heritage Month in Ontario. May 5 is also recognized as the South Asian Arrival Day. It commemorates the arrival of South Asians from the Indian subcontinent to the Americas beginning on May 5, 1838.

This special month provides us a good opportunity to look back at the history, successes and accomplishments of these people in Ontario. It is a time to celebrate our achievements and pay tribute to the men and women of this heritage.

From the province's early beginnings, members of Asian and South Asian communities came to Ontario

with the hopes and dreams of working, living and making a better life in this province. Today, members from these communities continue to play a prominent role in all aspects of our society thanks to Canada's democratic process and the freedoms guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In Ontario, we display a rich tapestry of cultures and traditions like the languages we speak, the songs that we sing, the religions we practise and the dress we wear. All these aspects, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem, have contributed to our province and become part and parcel of our country's culture. Here in Ontario, we welcome and embrace our differences. It is what makes us Canadian.

Last year, half of Ontario's new immigrants came from Asian and South Asian countries. Newcomers from these countries bring with them a wealth of skills, expertise and experience needed to contribute to Ontario's economy. The Ontario government wants to make sure that when newcomers come to Ontario, they can put these skills to work as quickly as possible.

But Asian and South Asian Heritage Month should not be used only to reflect on the past and present successes; it should also look towards the future and new opportunities. Our government recognizes the value in building global bridges. Ontario has led successful business trade missions to India and Pakistan in 2007 and to India in 2008. Ontario also hosted a business trade mission from India in 2008. Prior to these missions, we led a trade mission to China in 2005, and last fall our Premier returned to China on what turned out to be a very successful trade and investment mission.

These missions allow Ontario to tap into new markets, bring new investments and help create jobs. With the help of our dynamic Asian and South Asian Canadian communities and their extensive knowledge and international contacts, we will continue to expand these global bridges to places from afar so that we can take full advantage of new opportunities.

I'm pleased that both the Asian Heritage Month and South Asian Heritage Month are being officially recognized in Ontario. I would like to invite all members of this House and all Ontarians to join in celebrating these special events, celebrating diversity, celebrating past successes and celebrating new opportunities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to just take a few moments here to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and also the Minister of Community and Social Safety—Community and Social Safety? Community Safety. You've just got a new job, Rick.

The core of the legislation introduced by Mr. Milloy today is the rule that a worker certified in one province will be certified in another province without any additional training requirements or excessive red tape. I just want to say on behalf of the PC caucus that we'll take the

opportunity to review this legislation in greater detail, but this is a position that we do support in principle.

However, the introduction of the bill raises some legitimate questions about the qualifications for skilled trades in Ontario. Long before the recession hit, the PC caucus was pointing out how restrictive rules were stifling job creation, worsening the skills shortage and denying opportunity to young people. That's partly because in Ontario, for example, you need five qualified general carpenters, also known as journeymen, just to certify and train two apprentices, making it harder to get an apprenticeship in Ontario. As I said, that's just one of many, many examples that we've been raising in the House and outside of the Legislature.

1540

Other provinces, including Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan, have reduced or are reducing their ratios to open up apprenticeship positions and create jobs. In fact in Saskatchewan, they're bragging about reducing their ratios, and yet this McGuinty government is still refusing to act.

The key issue in this bill becomes what exemptions the government files. I note from a letter I've received from Gerald Mills, chair of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, that the Attorney General has already promised to file an exemption for certified accountants. We'll watch this issue very closely to see what exemptions the government files from one sector to the next. Mr. Mills points out in his letter—and I didn't know this—in a couple of provinces, you don't need any qualifications or certifications to be an accountant. You don't want people who just claim to be an accountant coming to Ontario and trying to join the CAs here if they're not qualified.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Switching topics, I'm also pleased to join with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services in recognizing Emergency Preparedness Week right across Canada. On behalf of the PC caucus I'm happy to salute our emergency service workers for the fine job they do for the people of Ontario.

Just this morning I was writing a note to congratulate Dave McKee for his 15 years of service with the Clearview fire department, and it got me thinking about all the good work that our local firefighters, police officers, paramedics and all of the emergency personnel do on our behalf in our communities. They don't just do the emergency stuff; they're often the people who are the backbone and the lifeblood of the community in terms of coaching our sports teams, organizing charities and the many good things they do, and they take their civic responsibility very seriously.

Recently, I have been working with a number of Simcoe county paramedics to help them with an issue they've been having with their pensions. I usually meet with Stephen Emo of the Collingwood Professional Firefighters Association every year. In talking with these

people and listening to some of their stories about all the difficult work they do on our behalf, you just have to admire them. And many of them in our small towns are volunteers and don't get remunerated for the work they do.

This year at my annual seniors' seminar, which is happening June 5 in Collingwood and June 12 in Alliston, I've invited our local fire prevention officers to come to speak because I know they have interesting and informative presentations about preparing for emergencies or how to avoid them altogether. In other years, I've had John Trude of the Collingwood OPP and Melody Tourigny of the Nottawasaga OPP come to my seniors' seminars. They're always well-received, very interesting and informative speakers, and I'm happy that some of them will be coming back again this year.

I know that all members of this House have similar examples of the good work that emergency service personnel do in our ridings. On behalf of the PC caucus, I want to join the government in saluting them for the good things they do and for helping us to prepare for an emergency or to avoid one altogether. Thank you.

ASIAN AND SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Peter Shurman: Asian and South Asian Heritage Month is an appropriate way to recognize a range of people who now live as Ontarians, but like so many, generously contribute their cultures to the greater good here in Canada. I join with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in paying tribute to this richly diverse segment of our population, many of whom I delight in having as my constituents in Thornhill.

Over 12% of Ontario's population and approximately 30% of the constituents in Thornhill are Asian or South Asian. We have doctors and skilled tradespeople, scientists and businesspeople. I applaud the minister for his inclusivity and also sincerely acknowledge Asian and South Asian Heritage Month. I wish all our fellow citizens well and express the hope that all of them and all Ontarians can prosper through hard work and move our society forward with what all of these good people have brought to our shores as their special gifts to Ontario and to Canada.

LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm pleased to have a few moments to speak to the Ontario Labour Mobility Act. We're going to be calling for hearings, as you would imagine, and lots of them, because I suspect we're going to need them.

Here is the line that the minister has on page 2, where he says, "We have also talked to leaders in the skilled trades to help them understand labour mobility and what it means for them," as if to say or to suggest that they don't quite get it or understand it, and we need to help them understand. So that leads me to believe that there

are some concerns here that we should be nervous about and worried about, because I, quite frankly, want to think and understand that we are increasing, raising the standards rather than possibly lowering them.

We want to hear from people about that, because if indeed we're raising the standards, I'm happy to support this bill. And if indeed we're lowering them, then we have to be a little more critical about what it is that we're going to be supporting or opposing.

The government appears to be committed to labour mobility. If only they were committed to labour training, to training our workforce in the way that we have not done it for years, that would make a hell of a difference.

In Manitoba, the international trade workers are trained well, so other provinces want to get them—to poach them—because they're doing a good job. Quebec, for example, spends a whole lot of money obligating the corporate sector to spend 1% on training where the corporate sector has a \$1-million payroll. That says to me that Quebec is committed seriously to training its workforce and looking long-term as it relates to the need to train and the need for the corporate sector, as well as governments, to be able to put some money into that sector. Some provinces are doing an incredible job of training, and those who are not are quite happy to be able to poach from the others, in a legal sort of way, which this permits provinces to do.

I've got to tell you, yes, those who operate under the red seal will be happy to do so, but we're talking about 300 occupations here that we're going to have to be concerned about when it comes to health and safety. When the minister says, "For those workers in non-red seal trades, we are working with other provinces to match trades," I don't quite know what that means.

So we want hearings. We want to be able to hear from the countless occupations that will be affected and associations that have concerns to come forward and raise their concerns to us. Once we've done that and we've had the proper hearings and the proper expertise, then we'll be able to talk about this bill.

ASIAN AND SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure as a New Democrat to welcome 62% of all Asian and South Asian immigrants to this province of Ontario, but I have to say to the minister that we know that one of the reasons that South Asians and Asians come to Ontario is because things are not so good back home. I want to talk about that, because I hear about this constantly from the South Asian groups and Asian groups that I have in my riding.

We have Tamils out front right now who are engaged in a hunger strike, and they are doing that because of the deaths of their relatives back in Sri Lanka. They're South Asians. Why does this minister not go out and speak to them in support?

We have the largest group of Tibetans anywhere outside of Nepal in Ontario, and yet Tibetans cannot go

home because of the invasion of the Chinese of their territory, where press are not allowed. Why doesn't the minister speak about human rights in China and the Chinese territories?

Speaking about China, the China rights committee would love to be able to support those signers of Charter 8 who are now all in prison for simply asking for a move towards democracy in China. We have an opportunity here as legislators, although provincial, to speak out on the side of human rights and to speak out for South Asians in our communities who have demanded that we do. We should not be doing trade with China unless we're speaking about human rights in China.

I had the pleasure of also rejoicing with the Vietnamese in my community at James Culnan Catholic School. To all of those across Asia and South Asia who have come to Ontario to make their home because of our civil rights, let's grant them civil rights back home.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask all members to join me in welcoming, in the east members' gallery, the former member from Thornhill in the 38th Parliament, Mario Racco. Mario, welcome back to the Legislature today.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given last Wednesday by the Minister of Health concerning cuts to services and closings at the Bowmanville and Uxbridge hospitals. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Georgas of the Blue Mountains for sending me this petition.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and
1550

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car

washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

"Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

"Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon; and

"Whereas the following have endorsed SCAN legislation: city of Ottawa, city of Kingston, city of Hamilton, federation of Ontario municipalities, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Police Services Board, Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi, Ottawa Neighbourhood Watch executive committee, Concerned Citizens for Safer Neighbourhoods, Eastern Ontario Landlord Organization, Friends and Tenants of Ottawa Community Housing, Hintonburg Community Association, Somerset Street Chinatown BIA, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa and the Dalhousie Community Association;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

ROUTE 17/174

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que la route 17/174 a besoin d'être élargie à quatre voies, du chemin Trim à la route régionale Prescott-Russell 8, afin d'améliorer la sécurité routière;

« Attendu que la route 17/174 a été reconnue par le passé pour sa condition dangereuse ainsi que le taux d'accidents annuel notable;

« Attendu que cette route représente la principale voie d'accès à la capitale nationale pour la population ouvrière de Clarence-Rockland, Alfred et Plantagenet et Hawkesbury;

« Attendu que les comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell ont manifesté leur intérêt à effectuer une étude environnementale destinée à » l'élargissement « de la route 17/174 en passant une résolution au conseil;

« Attendu que la ville d'Ottawa a passé une résolution au conseil demandant soit à la province ou aux comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell de prendre l'initiative de l'étude environnementale pour la route 17/174;

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral et le gouvernement provincial se sont tous deux engagés à fournir 40 \$ millions pour l'élargissement de la route 17/174;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires soient alloués aux comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell afin de réaliser l'évaluation environnementale obligatoire à l'élargissement de la route 17/174 de deux à quatre voies, du chemin Trim à la route régionale Prescott-Russell 8. »

C'est avec plaisir que j'y ajoute ma signature.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should recognize the importance of rural health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network commissioned a report by the Hay Group that recommends downgrading the emergency room at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital (CEE) Hospital in Petrolia to an urgent-care ward; and

"Whereas, if accepted, that recommendation would increase the demand on emergency room services in Sarnia; and

"Whereas, as of today, many patients are already redirected ... to the Petrolia emergency room for medical care; and ...

"Whereas Petrolia's retirement and nursing home communities are also dependent on easy access to the CEE hospital;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network to completely reject the report of the Hay Group and leave the emergency room designation at Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia" as is.

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with Alexis.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion"—billion with a B; and

"Whereas over 70% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than" any other unemployed Canadian; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in" PEI, Newfoundland, all the other provinces "and thus, are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government" in Ottawa "to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's" hard-working "unemployed workers."

I support the unemployed workers in Ontario and I affix my name to the petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I have signed this.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

"Whereas the Ottawa Catholic School Board's capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions where school boards are not in debt and where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board's educational development charges bylaw;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic School Board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans."

I send this petition forward with Grace.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Gordon and Carolyn Pitt of Collingwood for sending me this petition.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

1600

LUPUS

Mr. Kim Craitor: I want to thank the Lupus Foundation of Ontario for allowing me to read in this petition in support of people affected by lupus.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

"Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

"Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

"We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario."

I'm extremely proud to sign my signature in support of this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Sarnia-Lambton do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition and will sign it and send it down with Adelina.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the Green Energy and Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature and send it via page Robyn.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario"—and more coming; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Bruce-Grey have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I have signed this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN
ECONOMY ACT, 2009LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE
ET L'ÉCONOMIE VERTE

Mr. Smitherman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / *Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure to lead off the debate on third reading.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant Laurel Broten and I'd like to thank her for the leadership that she has brought to this initiative. As I have in the past in this House during question period, I want to thank all of the members of the Legislature, and especially the committee, for the efforts that they have made. Lastly, I want to thank everyone who hasn't been thanked so far, including other members in this House, like my parliamentary assistant Phil McNeely, and the many visitors to this House who have contributed to the progress that has propelled us to this spot today. I want to thank the Green Energy Act Alliance and others like them all across our vast and beautiful province who embrace a clean, green future for Ontario.

I want to thank the number one environmentalist in Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty. Even before 2003, when he became Premier, he had set a determined path forward to a destination where North America's biggest polluter will be silenced, where mercury will be reduced and where rates of premature death will be reduced.

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: You probably could get on the speakers list there, but I know you're not accustomed to participating in a debate when you have the floor.

I'm proud that we've reduced reliance on coal by about 40% so far, and that no later than 2014, coal will no longer be used for electricity generation in Ontario. We do hope that this third reading debate will clarify the position of the Progressive Conservative Party on the future of coal, for it seems that through the debate my opposition critic, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, has become known as “Yak King Coal.” But our determination has not wavered. The decision to eliminate coal isn't just the largest single climate change initiative in North America; that leadership decision has

set in motion an energy renaissance that has contributed billions of investment to Ontario's energy reliability. And it has provided the instigation for the Green Energy Act.

Make no doubt about it, this bill positions Ontario in the future, not in the past. And in getting there first, we know the early adapters are the ones who gain the economic rewards. That's why we know there are so many jobs to be had in the green economy—government economic forecasters say 50,000 direct and indirect jobs in the first three years. I know it has become the official strategy of the official opposition to mock those projections, but throughout the hearings the honourable member heard from Renfrew Hydro, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the mayor of the township of South Algonquin, who have said that the Green Energy Act represents jobs in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Perhaps you're wondering why I'm talking so much about the member and his party. It's simple: I want him to support the bill. In fact, we want to encourage support from all parties. That's why the amendments have been moved. My PA the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore will speak to these amendments in greater detail, but these amendments sought to address on point many of the concerns that Ontario's opposition parties brought forward.

Over the past few months, it has been my privilege to travel across the province and speak with Ontarians about our proposed Green Energy Act. I've visited over 20 communities, large and small, urban and rural, in the north, south, east and west of the province of Ontario. At every turn, I've been struck by Ontarians' understanding of the promise of the proposed act. They recognize its importance to the environment, and certainly they recognize its potential to supercharge the green economy.

Let me provide a few examples. DMI Industries is a wind tower manufacturer in Fort Erie. This is a company that makes a superb product, but because its customers are suffering in this economic downturn, it is suffering, too. Yet DMI is looking ahead with optimism. It knows that if this legislation is passed, in particular with its enhanced domestic content provisions, it can expect new opportunities that will lead to business growth and jobs to benefit the people in its community.

1610

What this means is that this government understands there are more job opportunities related to the green economy and we will be working hard to ensure that the technologies built by the labour of Ontario workers are put to excellent use.

ARISE Technologies is a leader in solar technology. This Waterloo-based company is convinced the feed-in tariff proposed by this act is exactly the step that's required to boost investor confidence and access to financing. It expects that if the act is passed, a number of projects that are currently on its drawing board will get under way and new ones will step up to the plate.

I recently visited the Stanton family dairy farm in Ilderton, near London, which has set up a biogas plant for responsible manure management. This farm has started to

pump power into the provincial grid and in fact has the capacity to fully power its entire local community. Our government envisages thousands of similar points of generation across the province as more small renewable energy projects get up and running faster, should this act be passed.

A key provision of the proposed Green Energy Act is that First Nations and Metis communities would be able to fully participate in Ontario's energy sector. I've had the chance to meet with aboriginal leaders to discuss opportunities and to see some of the good work they're building upon, and we're all excited about the possibilities. For instance, in North Bay, I spoke with First Nations communities about their interest in and proposals for water power and biofuel projects. I've twice been to Ear Falls, where the Lac Seul First Nation and Ontario Power Generation have developed a model partnership to build and operate a water power project that will provide enough clean electricity to power 5,000 homes. I am aware of several other aboriginal communities that are eagerly waiting for this legislation to move forward many other renewable energy projects and partnerships.

Internationally, Ontario's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Last Friday, British economist and former World Bank chief economist Sir Nicholas Stern predicted that the proposed Green Energy Act would be "extremely persuasive" to other jurisdictions and called the opportunities ahead an "economic no-brainer."

On conservation, local distribution companies are taking the bull by the horns and leading conservation and energy efficiency initiatives. I've visited several local distribution companies, including Milton Hydro, where I met with employees and observed the use of smart meters and the way in which the residents of Milton have grabbed hold of time-of-use pricing and are taking control of their own electricity use.

If Bill 150 is passed, about \$900 million will be spent on conservation strategies over the next three years. These investments, in addition to existing programs, will help a typical family in Ontario reduce their energy consumption by 15% to 20%.

Giving Ontarians the tools to understand and reduce their electricity use is good not only for the environment, but also for our wallets. The creation of a culture of conservation is timely, because everyone knows that the price of electricity is under pressure to rise in the future.

The proposed act has the potential, in so many ways, to make a real difference to businesses, communities and families across Ontario. The 50,000 jobs that would result would be based in areas as broadly reaching as technological research and engineering; financing and building; manufacturing, maintenance and construction; and in many other areas.

In fact, a few weeks ago, I visited Durham College in Whitby, which has developed new energy-related training programs that will be launched and open for students this September. These programs have been specifically designed to meet the growing demand for well-educated, highly trained workers in the renewable energy field.

There are similar programs being developed by universities and colleges all across the province.

Ontario stands at a crucial point. There are huge opportunities in green energy and the green economy if we make the right decisions now. Today we can send a message to the world that Ontario seeks to be North America's leading jurisdiction for the development of renewable energy. Today we can commit to creating a culture of conservation that will stand Ontarians in good stead for generations. Today we can say yes to the leading-edge economy that will deliver opportunity and prosperity to our people and our province for years to come.

In closing, I encourage members from all parties in this House to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to join the debate on the proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act, an act that, if passed, would make a crucial difference to Ontarians, to our environment and to this province. Our steady steps toward a greener future have given us the confidence to take a bold leap forward with the proposed Green Energy Act. It's progressive, yet practical, and it builds upon all the work this government has already done to build a reliable electricity system, to increase Ontario's supply of renewable energy and to get off dirty coal. At its core, the proposed Green Energy Act is all about creating and fostering opportunities for Ontario and Ontarians for decades to come.

Over the last several weeks, our government has listened to the comments of Ontarians and improved upon our proposed legislation, and today I am proud to have the opportunity to outline some of these key amendments and policy developments. But before I do that, I would just like to take a moment to thank all of those who appeared before the Standing Committee on General Government in our review of the act, as well as those who provided written submissions through the committee process as well as through Ontario's EBR registry.

I want to thank my fellow committee members. Together, we held seven days of hearings in Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, London and Ottawa, and we heard comments on all sides of the debate. I am confident that the committee process and our subsequent recommendations and amendments have helped to make the Green Energy Act a better, stronger bill.

The first amendment I would like to discuss deals with home energy audits. When it comes to home energy audits, our original intent remains: We believe that it is important to make these audits more common in Ontario, for them to become a typical part of every home sale. Awareness of energy use is key to developing a culture of conservation, and knowing the opportunities for annual savings on energy costs will encourage Ontarians to make important investments in energy efficiency. We proposed mandatory home energy audits in Bill 150, knowing the official opposition's platform had included mandatory home energy audits and that members of the

Ontario Legislature unanimously supported the bill introduced by my colleague the member from Ottawa—Orléans, Phil McNeely.

However, we also heard concerns during the committee process, and we have listened. The bill has been amended to add flexibility to address situations where the buyer believes that a home rating is not necessary. The buyer can waive, in writing, his or her right to receive a rating. If buyers do not waive their right to receive a rating, the mandatory requirement stays in effect and the seller must obtain an audit and provide a rating. Where a buyer does not exercise the waiver, a seller cannot accept an offer to purchase unless he or she provides the rating to the buyer. Our government believes that many purchasers will still want to know the amount of energy that a prospective home uses. We urge people to conduct energy audits as part of their negotiating process, but it will now be their choice.

On another topic, through the committee process we heard from presenters who asked that the proposed Green Energy Act recognize the important and unique role of communities. That's why we introduced an amendment that clarifies that the proposed act must be administered in a way that promotes community consultation.

Il n'y a aucun doute que les Ontariennes et Ontariens se préoccupent de la question de l'énergie renouvelable. Ils veulent faire partie de la solution verte. De fait, l'un des éléments les plus intéressants de la loi proposée est qu'elle faciliterait la création de milliers de petits projets d'énergie verte, conçus et mis au point par les Ontariennes et Ontariens, qu'ils vivent en ville ou à la campagne.

Community involvement and engagement is critical, because there is no question that Ontarians are engaged in the issue of renewable energy and that they are eager to be part of the green solution. In fact, one of the most exciting elements of the proposed act is its potential to encourage thousands of smaller green energy projects, conceived and developed by Ontarians, in urban and rural areas across the province. Certainly Ontarians want and deserve a full say as we move forward.

1620

Our government has made it clear that public consultation must be part of the streamlined renewable energy approvals process that is currently being developed in a consultative manner by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. We would also task a working group of ministries, together with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, to develop a process to ensure that proponents consult with municipalities on site requirements and local infrastructure. A provincial program would be established to ensure municipalities could recoup their costs. As well, a fund dedicated to providing grants and assistance to local community groups would assist in allowing communities and even citizen co-ops to generate their own power and power for the grid, leading to a greener power system for us all. It would also facilitate the creation of the kinds of citizen-led energy co-operatives popular in some other

countries like Denmark through which community members come together to take ownership of renewable energy projects.

As the minister has said, another key provision of the proposed act is that First Nations and Metis communities are able to participate fully in the renewable sector. Aboriginal leaders have been quick to recognize the opportunities inherent in this provision and are eager to build and operate renewable energy projects for the benefit of their communities. If passed, a provincial program would be set up to ensure that First Nations and Metis communities as well could recover soft costs associated with these projects, subject to eligibility criteria. This legislation would set the stage for the active participation of aboriginal peoples in the development and implementation of renewable energy facilities.

As legislators, our first commitment is always to the best interests, health and safety of Ontarians. All renewable energy projects developed in this province are expected to meet high safety and environmental standards, building on the experiences here in Ontario and around the world. To elevate this certainty, our government has sought to amend the proposed grounds for appeal under the Environmental Protection Act to protect Ontarians against serious harm to their health. Further, we propose that the Ministry of the Environment establish and fund an academic research chair to examine potential health effects of renewable energy projects. The ministry would also continue to review health and scientific research on green energy sources to be sure that Ontarians' health and safety standards reflect the most up-to-date information.

We have listened to the concerns raised about health concerns and setbacks, and the amendment has been passed to change the grounds under the Environmental Protection Act to establish and fund the academic chair and to continue to review health and scientific research. The Ministry of the Environment will also continue to consult on establishing province-wide minimum setback standards and regulations regarding renewable energy projects with regard to human health, noise and low-frequency vibration.

As you know, Speaker, the proposed legislation seeks to upload responsibility for determining setbacks for wind projects. Currently, these setbacks are determined through municipal bylaws, which have led to a mishmash of results. We propose to create province-wide requirements with strong and uniform standards. By taking on this responsibility, the province would relieve municipalities of the burden of work and funds required to build capacity and scientific understanding of each technology for each individual municipality. Moving forward, as I've said, we propose that the Minister of the Environment consult to establish setback standards and regulations and take into consideration human health, noise and low-frequency vibration.

Our government has also heard public concerns about stray voltage and the potential effect on health. As with all power sources, proper inspection is required to safely

and effectively maintain renewable energy systems. If the act is passed, the minister would direct the Ontario Energy Board to manage and address all issues related to stray voltage.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the feed-in tariff is a major part of the proposed Green Energy Act. This program would allow Ontario to procure energy from renewable energy sources under certain stated conditions, including through price guarantees.

Our government has introduced an amendment to clarify the government's commitment as it relates to domestic content. Fundamentally, we believe that companies that develop wind turbines and solar panels in one part of the province should have the satisfaction of knowing that their products are effectively capturing the power of the wind or the sun in other parts and providing clean, green energy to their fellow Ontarians.

We also want the economic growth and green jobs that these and other companies would gain to occur in this province. The domestic content levels proposed would be consistent with trade agreements and developed in consultation with relevant sectors.

Continuing on in the area of procurement, our government intends to keep a close eye on the development of renewable energy technologies. We would review future opportunities to potentially procure such sources as geothermal, solar thermal and small-scale wind.

We have also included an amendment with respect to the minister's directive powers. This change clarifies that the new directive authority under the Green Energy Act would focus procurement directives to the Ontario Power Authority only on renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation.

As a final point, the proposed act provides that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario would report annually to this Legislature on Ontario's progress on energy conservation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and we've introduced an amendment to ensure that the commissioner would have full access to the information needed to meet this responsibility.

The government would also ensure that information and documentation related to the development of conservation targets would be made available to the public.

The proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act is a historic piece of legislation and, if passed, would affect us all for years to come. The amendments we proposed make this bill a better bill, and I'm proud to be part of a government that listens closely to the people of Ontario and responds. I am equally proud that our government has taken a position of leadership in the crucial area of clean, green energy.

Si la loi est adoptée, elle nous aiderait à préserver l'énergie et à assurer un environnement plus sain pour nos enfants et nos petits-enfants. Elle devrait nous aider à lutter contre le changement climatique, l'un des défis les plus urgents auxquels la planète est confrontée aujourd'hui. Elle favorisera le développement d'une économie verte en Ontario en préservant la compétitivité et la prospérité de la province, en générant des emplois et des possibilités pendant de nombreuses années à venir.

If passed, this act would help us all to conserve energy and ensure a healthier environment for our children and our children's children. It would help to fight climate change, one of the most urgent concerns facing the planet today, and it would boost development of a green economy in Ontario, securing the competitiveness and prosperity of the province and providing jobs and opportunity into the future.

I strongly urge all members of this Legislature to support Bill 150.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech by the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure and the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore today on the Green Energy Act, Bill 150.

I have one key question to do with this bill, and that is, will the residents of Ontario be able to afford to pay their electricity bill five years from now if this legislation does indeed pass, as I suspect it will? I can tell you that I have coming into my constituency office on a regular basis these days more and more people who can't pay their hydro bills at the current price for electricity.

Through the McGuinty economics that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade was talking about, what happens to the price of their electricity bill when the government buys offshore wind power for 19 cents a kilowatt hour or solar power at 80 cents a kilowatt hour and then they sell it at six cents a kilowatt hour? That's obviously going to have a significant effect on the price of electricity that all ratepayers pay.

1630

The official opposition, of course, are not experts on these things, so we hired London Economics to look into this issue, and they've raised some real concerns about what this bill will mean to the average person's electricity bill. I have concerns about that, because I am seeing people that can't afford to pay their bill now. So what's going to happen if London Economics is correct in their assumption of the sorts of increases that this bill would cause?

I can say that we have some real concerns with what's going to happen to the competitiveness of the price of electricity in the province of Ontario, both for consumers and also for business. How many jobs are we going to lose? They talk about 50,000 created; I think we may just lose that many.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The radioactive elephant in the room is nuclear energy, that the real energy policy of this government is spending \$40 billion of taxpayers' money on new nuclear reactors and refurbishing of nuclear reactors. That's where the major bulk of energy is going to come from. Remember, this is the government who promised to close coal-fired plants in 2007, then 2011 and now 2014. Certainly, the colour green is in the room: It's the colour of money. Ontario taxpayers are going to be paying for the use of nuclear energy in this province—

\$40 billion and counting. They're going to be on the hook for cost overruns in nuclear energy.

It's not only there. When you look at OPG, where 57% of the employees make over \$100,000 a year, and where Jim Hankinson, the CEO, made \$2.475 million last year, you can see that the colour green enters into the conversation there in terms of money as well. So certainly green is in the air, but it's not going to be going—most of the green money raised by taxpayers—towards renewables, because it's going to nuclear. There's only so much money.

I just want to reiterate that every major environmental group—Pembina, the David Suzuki Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, and the Ontario Clean Air Alliance—are anti-nuclear, and they have talked to this government about that and about their policies. Of course, what they've said has fallen on deaf ears.

So here we are with a bill that is, again, a little bit of icing where we need a cake in terms of climate change and environmentalism. We ask the government to really listen to environmentalists and put some teeth into this. Otherwise, it's just more greenwashing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Yesterday, I had the opportunity to represent Minister Smitherman and to present the Green Energy Act to the 2009 legislative conference of the Building and Construction Trades Department in Ottawa. I was able at the same time to hear the energy initiatives of New Brunswick, Manitoba and Alberta. I was proud to say, with utmost confidence, that the Green Energy Act would establish Ontario as a North American leader in green energy.

I'm pleased as well that the energy audit will become a standard part of home sales. It is well known that home energy efficiency retrofits are the best investments families can make. The energy audit at the time of the home sales will incent energy efficiency upgrades.

Job creation is a very important part of the Green Energy Act, and especially at these times. As the minister said, 50,000 new jobs will be created as part of the Green Energy Act. The Green Energy Act would allow amendments to the building code—extremely important—that would establish energy conservation as the purpose of the code.

I would like to see initiatives like the colleges have undertaken, under the leadership of Humber College and Seneca College. They've formed a secretariat of all the colleges and are well on their way to making their sector energy efficient. They've shown real leadership. This act will further incent their activities.

This act will give communities and homeowners, including First Nations and Metis communities, the power and the tools they need to participate in developing electricity for the new green economy. The Green Energy Act will build a strong culture of conservation by helping homeowners, governments, hospitals, schools and industrial employers to transition to lower energy costs.

I'm proud to be part of a government that understands that coal-fired electricity is a form of generation we can no longer rely upon, a government whose off-coal plan is the single largest climate change initiative in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to comment on Bill 150 today as well. We had an opportunity with the committee to hear many delegations that came in. One of the most impressive ones that I heard the day I was on committee was Dr. McMurtry, when he came in and spoke about the concerns of people with wind turbines in their communities. He's asked and called for, and I understand that the Premier's considering doing, a study to see if there's anything to the claims and Dr. McMurtry's studies that show that there are concerns with wind turbines being located close to people's homes. People seem to have some health concerns. There are environmental concerns with proximity to either homes or to animal life, birds in particular.

The residents in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton are concerned also with Bill 150, part of the long-term goals with the Minister of Energy to close a major employer in our area. They're right now, through OPG, doing studies of biomass so that they can see if there's an opportunity to keep those jobs there, either in some combination of burning coal or going to another product altogether. It's a study of biomass. There's a lot of that that takes place in Sarnia-Lambton at Lambton College, in association with the University of Western Ontario at their campus. Those jobs are important to all of Ontario as well as to Sarnia-Lambton. There are approximately 300 to 400 people who work there. An economic hit would be in the range of \$300 million a year to our riding.

I look forward to the rest of the debate today, and hopefully we can bring some closure to this debate and also improve the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has the floor.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to spend a moment to talk about the comments made by the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, and I certainly thank the members for Sarnia-Lambton, Parkdale-High Park, Ottawa-Orleans and Parry Sound-Muskoka for joining the debate today.

A diversified energy supply mix, along with a combination of regulated and market prices, will help maintain stability in electricity pricing. We expect that Ontario's supply mix, with a solid endowment of legacy hydroelectric and low-variable-cost nuclear power as well as a mixture of regulated and market rates, will continue to help us ensure fair prices for the province's energy users. The cost of renewing our electricity infrastructure and moving towards a 21st-century grid and a 21st-century supply mix is expected to increase electricity prices approximately 1% annually over the next 15 years for ratepayers. We're upgrading our grid, investing in clean generation and stimulating and supporting the

economy at the same time. I think that those are steps with which we can move forward in a very proud way.

I want to make comment in response to the member of Parkdale–High Park and let her know about some of the individuals who spoke very positively about the Green Energy Act. Mark Lutes, the David Suzuki Foundation: “With this initiative, Ontario is on track to become a leader in the global shift to clean energy and in preventing dangerous climate change.” Keith Stewart, climate change campaign manager, WWF Canada: “This act puts in place the framework for green energy to thrive and could set us on a path toward a future based on the efficient use of renewable energy. We look forward to working with the government to build on this framework as the act is finalized and implemented.” We too look forward to working with those individuals and others as we move forward with the Green Energy Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I’m speaking much earlier than I’d anticipated. I didn’t realize that the minister would have so little to say about his Green Energy Act that he has worked so long and hard on and has been promoting for months. Long before even the Legislature had the opportunity to view it, he was out doing a pre-sales job. Today he didn’t have much to say about it, but I guess he doesn’t really have to, because he knows he’s going to get the act he wants because they have a majority in this House and they only do what they want to do, and they do what satisfies their stakeholders.

1640

He’s talked about this being a revolution in electricity generation and changing the face of electricity generation and distribution here in the province of Ontario. But, you know, in the past, as health minister he promised a revolution too. Remember when he promised a revolution in long-term care? He promised a revolution in long-term care, and we got waiting lists for beds in long-term-care homes like we’ve never seen before. So, you see, he sells it. He’s good at promoting or bringing out the plan, but he’s not all that good at delivering.

You remember the LHINs. How are they working? Those LHINs, how are they doing? Gosh, we’re hearing a lot about those LHINs. This is what we could end up with, with this Green Energy Act, because the minister didn’t really think this out very well before he went for his little vacation over to Europe last year. He went over to Germany, Spain and Denmark, then came back and thought he had the whole thing solved. He’s going to come up with an act that is going to look after every one of our possible needs here in Ontario. But he didn’t actually do his homework. He went parading around Europe with Dr. Suzuki and came home with an enlightened—it was like an epiphany and all of a sudden, he’s got it all figured out for Ontario here. Maybe you should be careful about how much work you do on vacation sometimes. That might have been the problem.

One of the big concerns for us is the lack of disclosure about the ramifications and the effects of this act. Let me

begin by making it very clear that we in the Progressive Conservative Party on this side of the House are very much in favour of, and in the greatest possible way promote, the improvement, the enhancement, the growth and the necessity of green energy in the province of Ontario. But we also believe it is paramount that you be honest with the people.

The government was talking about the poll numbers. The Green Energy Act Alliance conducted a poll, and they came up with some really good numbers: 87% of the population were in favour of the Green Energy Act. Unfortunately, the population is getting only one side of the story. I’m surprised the numbers were that low, because if I asked anybody I know, “Do you believe in green energy, and should we be promoting green energy?”—I’m surprised it wouldn’t be 97%.

But if you ask those same people the question, “Do you believe that we should have massive growth in the amount of green energy we’re producing in the province of Ontario if it’s going to cost you twice as much—or maybe more—for electricity?” “Oh, well, I have to think about that for a moment. Maybe I’m not quite as supportive as I was before.” “Oh, and by the way, do you support all of this growth in green energy if it’s going to mean that the prices will double, and it’s not going to really reduce greenhouse gases that much, because we just don’t have the capacity to be solely sourced in green energy? It’s not going to reduce greenhouse gases in this province by much more than 5% or 10%.” Then those poll numbers would drop again, because the minister doesn’t want people to know all of the facts. He just wants to go out there and do the sales job.

But we did the homework. We didn’t do it personally—I didn’t do it personally. I wouldn’t have that kind of capability. I don’t have that kind of training, but we did, because we thought it was absolutely necessary to ensure that the people had something, something other than the bluster of George Smitherman, to base their decisions on and their support on whether or not to get the full information on this act. So what we did is we contracted a firm, an internationally recognized and respected firm that does forecasting like this as part of their stock in trade. We asked them to take the Green Energy Act, no directions whatsoever, just take the Green Energy Act and tell us what it will cost. They produced a report for us, and I have a copy of this. Maybe I could ask one of the pages to deliver this to the minister. Cameron, would you give this to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy? That would be the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

So we commissioned the report by London Economics International to try to get to the bottom of what this act would cost. It’s a 67-page comprehensive report, and it’s available to anybody. It’s on their website. In fact, this is ironic: I’m getting messages that the ministry is now calling London Economics International to talk about the report. Well, I guess if they want information, they’re going to have to pay for it.

The minister’s got hundreds of people on the public payroll who maybe should have done an analysis, be-

cause when we ask the government to provide us with an analysis of where they came up with such cockamamie numbers as a 1% increase in the cost of electricity per year, when we ask them to justify that, we get nothing. We just get the Premier and the minister going on about how those are the numbers. So they just took it out of the air.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can tell the consumer minister that this covers it all. We asked them to do an in-depth analysis, and that's what they did for us.

Do you know what they told us? At the end of the implementation of the Green Energy Act, this could cost the average household \$1,200 per year. I don't think electricity is costing \$120,000 a year, so that would mean it would be more than 1%—just a bit. The cost of the implementation of this act is \$1,200 per year.

They want to talk about all of the positive things in the act—and there are positive things; I won't deny that. But you see, our job as opposition is to ensure that the public gets the whole story. It's their job to sell the bill. It's our job to point out the problems in it.

When we had the hearings across this province—and we had them in Sault Ste. Marie, we had them in London, we had them in Ottawa, and we had four days here in Toronto—I can tell you it was an eye-opener for me. I can tell you it was an eye-opener for the parliamentary assistant. Some of that testimony was an eye-opener for her and her committee. In fact, I have some quotes of hers in Hansard here that I'll get to a little later on. Clearly, they didn't expect some of the testimony and the presentations that they received.

Let's just stick to the cost issue for the time being. The feed-in tariff rates—and this is all in the London Economics International report—are higher than even those in Germany or Denmark. The cost of power to a homeowner in Denmark is about 39 cents per kilowatt hour versus—well, if you take the all-in cost here in Ontario, you're talking about maybe 11 cents per kilowatt hour. In Germany, it's 24 cents a kilowatt hour. When I raised that issue with the Premier, do you know what he said? He said—and I think he was talking to his mother about it, because he always talks to his mother—something like, “Don't look at the cost per kilowatt hour. Look at the total bill.” So I sent a little thing over to the Premier. I just drew a couple of pictures—and I can do this because my wife was born in Germany. I drew two houses. One was a little wee house in Germany, and one was one of those great big houses on the Bridle Path. I'm not an artist or anything, but it was just representative by size. What I wanted the Premier to understand is that you can't compare the energy use in an average German home with the average energy use in a home in Ontario. We don't live in the same kinds of homes. We don't live in the same sizes of homes. When it comes to power consumption, as they said in that movie—what was it, Godzilla?—size matters. Size matters, so you can't change the energy use in the province of Ontario, where—and I'm not suggesting this is the way we should be, but the

reality is that we have homes that are 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 or 10,000 square feet. That's kind of excessive in my opinion, but that is what we live in. We're not going to tear them all down and build little bungalows for everybody. So the cost per kilowatt hour does matter because you cannot reduce your power completely in a large home. Regardless of what you're doing, it's going to cost more to operate that home.

1650

Let's look at some of these feed-in tariff rates. The minister is just sold on wind. Now, you do know that there are a lot of people in the Liberal Party who are going to profit by the development of wind power? That's just the reality. That's out there; that's public record. We know that. You know how the current government used to say about the Tories, “Tax cuts for the rich”?

Mind you, they're starting to catch on now that tax cuts actually make the economy work, because now they've done what we've told them to do, which is bring in tax cuts in their budget.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think the member for Huron—Bruce said it herself. I could get the Hansard if I had to. She got up and said, “Tax cuts are wrong. Tax cuts don't work.” But now they're doing it. We have had some influence on them. We've taught them that in order to get an economy working, you've got to allow the people in that economy to work. So they are catching on.

The minister talked about coal—

Mr. Jeff Leal: What's your coal policy?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Peterborough wants to know our coal policy. What the people in Peterborough want to know is what his policy on that Dalton sales tax is, because they're not sure. They're not sure because they see that some of the things he said in the local press were opposing that tax and some of the things that, now that he's been put in line—he's been given the daily dose. Even if they have to give it to them intravenously, they are forced to take the Kool-Aid. They can drink it voluntarily, or they get it intravenously, but over there they get it. It's given to them every day.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's all about jobs and people.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Now, on the record, he's selling it very much.

Anyway, the minister likes to talk about coal. This is the government that promised that they were going to shut down coal by 2007. The other day when I asked the Premier about the pricing of this Green Energy Act, he said, “Our best advice”—you know, he does that, “our best advice.” He must have been getting that advice from the same people who told him that he could shut those coal plants down by 2007.

I know the member for Parkdale—High Park said earlier that the promise went from 2007 to 2011 to 2014. Actually, it went from 2007 to 2009 to 2011 to 2014. It's not good enough for them to break a promise once, twice, three times; they've got to do it four times. So there's the planning, the aptitude and the competence on the other

side: "We promise." But you've got to understand, a promise doesn't mean much to the McGuintyites. A promise is not that important. What's important is to see if they could hornswoggle the people just one more time.

This is one of the concerns that I have. It's tough to stand up here and speak against something that the uninformed think is going to be great for the environment. But here's the issue that I really have trouble with: These people know that all of the cost implications of this act, while they are excessive and gross, will not be felt by the people of this province until after the 2011 election. That's the way they play politics. They make sure that everything is timed in just such a way that by the time we do the regulations, by the time they actually start to do things with regard to this act, we'll already be into the run-up to the 2011 election. Do you know what they're going to go out and say? "See? Look at your hydro bills. They haven't gone up by 25%. They haven't doubled. The Conservatives were fearmongering." But wait for the full implementation of this bill. It's going to be something serious.

Speaking of serious, the government, as a result of the debates and a result of committee, has proposed a bunch of amendments. I know the parliamentary assistant today talked about amendments they made to the home energy audit. You know George hates to back down on something. It's not in his DNA. He likes to go in like a bull in a china shop and just barrel everybody out of way and say, "I'm getting my way." He did that with the LHINs, and look what we got. And that long-term-care revolution I was telling you about: There will soon be a revolution in long-term care, but it's not going to be the one he was thinking about.

Anyway, on this home energy audit, they proposed to make some changes because they were getting a fair bit of flak on it. In these audits—and this is one of the things that concerned us—there was no requirement in any part of the bill for anybody who had a home energy audit done, or was forced to do one as a condition of selling their home, or on the part of the new owner, to proceed with any changes, renovations or whatever that would enhance the energy efficiency of that home. You have to ask yourself, why would you bother doing that if you weren't actually going to improve the energy efficiency of the home? This was just something to get caught in the way of a transaction. I know they live in la-la land and they want everything to be dreamy. They want you to believe that when there's a transaction between two parties in a real estate deal, everything is rosy and everything is perfect.

It may start out like that, but once the lawyers get involved, you know what it's like. It's sort of like a divorce. There have been so many couples that have decided they're not going to be married anymore, and they're going to have an amicable separation and everything is going to work out all right. The next thing you know, they get two lawyers involved, and it's like World War III.

When you bring in this additional strain of the negotiations of a real estate transaction, nobody likes to be the

loser; everybody wants to be the winner. You're going to bring this thing in here, and all of a sudden you're going to and fro about the price of the house. What are you going to give up? How much are you going to reduce it because of this energy audit because we didn't like the number? We were looking for a 74, and we only got a 68. What the hell does that mean, you know? All of a sudden, now you've got this adversarial relationship that degenerates into almost a fight over a home energy audit, with no requirement to actually improve the energy efficiency of the home.

Then they did come out with some amendments which allow the two parties to forgo the energy audit if the buyer doesn't want one. There's always been the ability for a buyer to request a home energy audit, a home inspection, where I come from a septic inspection, or any of the kinds of things that people may believe require further analysis before closing the deal, making it solid. Those things have always been in the mix as part of a real estate transaction. They had to back down a little bit on that.

Do you know something else they backed down on? I didn't even talk about this during the debate on second reading, because I don't like to talk about things that I don't feel I'm on pretty safe ground on. You know, I won't go out there—

1700

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Oh, sure you do.

Mr. John Yakubuski: No, no. I know they're going to react to that. I'm not the kind of guy who just says something and then tries to find out if it was right or not. No. If I was, I'd have a Liberal Party membership card, but I don't have one. As a matter of fact, I failed the test because I couldn't invent things just helter-skelter out of the sky. I couldn't do it. I couldn't pull things out of thin air, so I failed the test and was denied the Liberal membership card. Now I have a Conservative one and I'm very, very proud of it. But anyway—

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Read that letter. Have you read that letter?

Mr. John Yakubuski: I haven't read it yet. Just give me time. I have a lot of letters to read.

Anyway, on this issue of health concerns, I never raised it during the second reading debate because I just didn't believe that I had the background. I don't have the scientific training to talk about that kind of stuff, but throughout the hearings it just came back, over and over again, every place we went, people talking about this, with genuine personal stories about how they've been affected by large-scale wind developments. As I said, I don't have the background to decide whether that's a valid claim or not, but do you know what I would think would be a prudent measure? Let me just get my glasses. I'm not quitting; I'm just bending down to get my glasses. I'm not collapsing. At some point, the debate might, but I'll go on. They put the energizers in me today.

Dr. Robert McMurtry, a former dean of health sciences, I believe, at the University of Western Ontario—is that correct?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. Great credentials.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The man's credentials are exquisite, unquestionably. They're top shelf, as they say—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Impeccable.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Impeccable. Thank you very much to the member for Sarnia—Lambton for helping me out on that.

He made a very prudent suggestion, and I'm going to quote him right out of Hansard, if I may. At this point, he was wrapping up. He'd gone through the whole—and we don't have enough time, unless we could get unanimous consent to sit till midnight.

He was asked to wrap up, and this is what he said: "My proposal is this: Authoritative guidelines must be developed, and the only way to do that is a well-designed epidemiological study conducted by arm's-length investigators, mutually agreeable to all sides. That must be done"—and he stressed there "must be done"—"as well as check for low-frequency noise. In the meantime, let us listen to and help the victims. Anything less would be an abandonment of responsibility by government."

Again, I'm not speaking from the scientific side because I don't pretend to be one, but would a prudent person—it's interesting that when we were having our last day of committee hearings in Toronto—I believe it was April 22—the government fully implemented the pesticide ban, because Earth Day was the 23rd, I believe. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker? So the government used what the NDP refers to so often in their debates as the precautionary principle, that if you don't know something is entirely safe, then you err on the side of caution and you do not proceed in that direction or down that path unless you can prove that it is safe. So in the case of pesticides, even though Health Canada has said repeatedly that 2,4-D, when used as directed, is completely safe, the government decided, "No, no, that is not good enough for us. We have concerns, so we are going to err on the side of caution and ban the use of this product." So if they're going to be consistent, if they're going to kind of speak out of one side of the mouth on these issues, then would it not have been prudent to say, "Hey, we've had a lot of evidence coming forward here, a lot of testimony. We don't know if it's scientifically correct, but we don't know that it's scientifically incorrect"? Would the prudent thing not be to say, "Okay, hold on a minute. Let's see if we can't get a third party to help us out here"?

What did they do? They appointed an academic chair. Those are just fancy words for it will be somebody else being paid for doing nothing. That's what that is because it is in no way, shape or form going to change the speed at which the government moves forward on this legislation. That is just a way to try to placate somebody, but nobody's going to be fooled by that. That's just not going to happen.

I noticed earlier that Don McCabe, the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, was in the audience—and, yes, he still is. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture would like us to vote for this bill—I believe

they're in favour of the bill—but they're in favour of the bill because there are some opportunities.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not speaking to Mr. McCabe; I'm speaking to you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The only problem, I say to the member, is that you won't be on TV and they might not be able to pick up what you're saying. I would appreciate your speaking through the Chair.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —but the member for Ancaster, whatever, the consumer minister, beat me to it.

Anyway—oh, I got the wrong Hansard here for Mr. McCabe. But I have it here; I certainly do. Anyway, of course, the OFA is in favour of the act, and I can understand why.

The minister talked about Stanton Farms. They had a great presentation down in London, one of the best presentations I've ever heard, about the importance and the opportunities for biogas, anaerobic digesters, to produce energy through methane. There are some opportunities for farmers here in this act. We recognize that.

We do wonder sometimes, though, why you would be paying 10.4 cents for over five megawatts of biogas, which is a big—biogas, by the way, or 14.7 cents for under five megawatts. If you look at it logically, you have to ask yourself, with wind, the fuel cost is zero. It was zero before I was born and it will be zero long after I'm dead—which may be soon, according to some of those people over there. But there is a cost involved in gathering, processing and producing energy from manure on the farms, yet they're paying a significantly lower rate. So again you have to ask yourself that question: Where are their friends? Where are the friends of the minister? Who are going to be the ones who profit the most from these FIT tariff rates?

There are some opportunities for farmers, there's no question about that, and we support that 100%. What that does is it deals with two issues. It deals with the issue of methane on the farms. I know that Don doesn't like it being called waste; he calls it an "underutilized resource" or something to that effect, and he's right. So it does deal with that issue of utilizing that underutilized resource. It also deals with the issue of production of green power, which we support, of course. It also deals with an industry, a key, integral industry in our province, and that is our farmers. At the best of times, we have to say, that's not an easy life, and in tough times, it's a really tough life. Over the last few years, it's been tough to make a decent living in the agricultural business. If you can create an opportunity that helps them, that's wonderful.

But they don't think that everything is—and Ms. Mitchell from Huron—Bruce was there for that presentation too, so she heard what Don McCabe had to say. I'm just going to quote a couple of things here.

1710

"When it comes to tower noise, we have issues out there right now where folks are saying that this is disrupting their lives. Let's make sure the science is behind this to reduce that noise potential and look for

opportunities to get that down to possibly as low as 45 decibels at night and no more than 50 during the day, because those are levels that we currently experience within the ag environment.... The other issue that needs to be taken into account here is that, as you multiply towers"—you see these big farms getting bigger and bigger, wind farms—"you will increase noise. The appropriate separation distances need to be identified as we move forward in those contexts to take them into account.

"This leads to the issue of effective enforcement. There must be provision for a rapid response to requests for noise testing. We cannot allow this to continue on as a distraction in the rural environment."

That was from Don McCabe of the OFA, who is supporting that. But Mr. McCabe had more. He wasn't done. "Moving forward to biodigesters: Biodigesters, as was alluded to in the second-last presentation, are an absolutely great opportunity." Oh, here is where he says it: "I wish to point out that farmers do not have any waste on our farms. We have underutilized, under-paid-for opportunities. Let's make those biodigesters an opportunity to move... forward."

He goes on further, "Solar farms"—and we proposed an amendment to support the OFA in this regard, and the Liberals just shot it down; they wouldn't even listen to it. But this is what Mr. McCabe said—

Mr. Robert Bailey: What did he tell us? What did he say?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'm going to tell you. Be patient, member from Sarnia-Lambton.

"Solar farms: Want to talk food versus fuel? This is it. The OFA is very opposed to the distribution of solar panels on to class 1, 2, 3 or 4 ag land. This is food."

The point I'm making is they take this stuff—the OFA is supporting the act, because they've taken it and they've balanced it out and they say, "On balance, we're going to support it, because there are some opportunities from it." But they don't like everything about it; in fact, there are probably more things about it they don't like, but they're hoping that the opportunities will enhance the incomes for some of their members, and I commend Don McCabe and the OFA for fighting on behalf of their members. But they don't support all of it.

It's sort of like, Mr. Speaker, if you're getting married—and I know you're married. But just because you're getting married doesn't mean you like every single little thing about your fiancée. But you're getting married anyway, because on balance, you believe that that's the best opportunity for you and the best decision for you to make. So I want the government to know that based on the Hansard, at the very least, it's going to be a strained marriage. At the very least, it's going to be a strained marriage between you and the OFA, and certainly not if you don't come through with what I'm sure are all kinds of promises you've made to them, because promising is something you do so willy-nilly without even thinking about it. It's just, "Oh, yeah, sure. What do you want? Yeah, I promise." "Sure, what do you want? No problem. I promise. I promise. I promise." Mr.

Speaker, their record on promises, as you know, is not very good. You know that they're in the Guinness world book of records as the biggest promise breakers in history. Did you know that?

The minister talks about 50,000 jobs—50,000 jobs. You know, Juan Carlos university in Madrid did a study. Again, I didn't analyze it; I'm just going to give you the numbers. They said that for every job created by renewable energy projects, particularly wind, they were losing 2.2 jobs in their economy because of the cost of power.

I want to tell you what the automotive parts manufacturers had to say about this bill—and I'm just getting to that 50,000 jobs while I preface that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Think of the jobs we're losing in auto.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Tell me about it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: How many people are employed in auto?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thirty-eight thousand.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Here's a minister who says, "We are going to create 50,000"—and the Premier too. The Premier has bought into it too.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He drank the Kool-Aid.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know who's pouring, who's mixing or whatever. Speaking of pouring, maybe I could get them to pour me a couple more of whatever this was, but it's good.

In the province of Ontario, the minister says, we're going to create 50,000 jobs over the next three years. That would work well in one of those biodigesters, that underutilized product on Don McCabe's farms. That would work well because that's what that is. Unfortunately, they keep utilizing that answer, and people are buying it because they want to believe, I guess, something positive.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I don't think people are buying it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hope not. I say, for the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, that he has a good handle on the rural communities and a good handle on the agricultural communities, and we're very pleased to have him back in the caucus; I can tell you that much. He brings a lot to the table.

They talk about these 50,000 jobs. No substantiation whatsoever about how they're going to create 50,000 jobs—none. But let's put this into perspective. Last year, the total number of people employed in the automobile manufacturing sector here in the province of Ontario was 38,000 people. We know that there are a heck of a lot less there now, but just think of who doesn't have a car in this province and all these trucks and vans and whatever. Thirty-eight thousand people—that was the total, and we export all kinds of vehicles—and they expect us to believe that they're going to create 50,000 jobs. The total number of people employed in the energy industry in Ontario today is 35,000, but they're going to create 50,000 new ones. That's the kind of stuff they say. That's the kind of stuff they say.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Sounds like a fairy tale to me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll tell you, I think he needs to have another chat with his mother.

The automotive parts manufacturers employ about 80,000 people in the province of Ontario. They use about \$700 million to \$800 million worth of electricity a year. That's about 10% of the total use in the province of Ontario, of the \$8 billion produced in the province of Ontario every year. Here's what they had to say about this act, about the creation of jobs. They're very concerned that this act could lead to further losses of jobs.

"If Ontario-based automotive parts manufacturers are not cost-competitive, jobs"—this is Gerry Fedchun of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association. I want to make sure I get the name in there. He is the president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association. "If Ontario-based automotive parts manufacturers are not cost-competitive, jobs will be lost. If Ontario-based automotive parts manufacturers are cost-competitive and reducing their greenhouse gas emissions at the same time, we all win."

To quote an individual in the industry, "If Ontario is out of step with the rest of North America with respect to energy prices, we are done." That's what he said: "We are done."

I questioned Mr. Fedchun a little later in the presentation, and I asked him, "If you're looking at even a 15% increase in the cost of electricity, can you guys survive?" Here's what he said: "A lot of companies will not, because right now the average cost of electricity in Ontario is 30% higher than our competitors"—so we're not cost-competitive now—"and if it goes up another 15%, that really kills us." So it's great that the government is buying a stake in Chrysler, because there will be nobody here to make the parts for Chrysler, because they'll be out of business under electricity prices rising like this.

1720

Hon. Ted McMeekin: You give us all hope.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The consumer minister says, "You give us all hope."

Interjection: Government services.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So what is it? Government services. Okay, pardon me: the government services minister. He's a little touchy. He wanted to make sure we got his title down right. So the government services minister.

I'll tell you what I'm going to say, Mr. Minister. I'm going say something truthful, which has been very, very rare coming from the minister with respect to this act. If he would take the copy of the report that I gave him—I know they're making calls to London Economics. They want to get some of the data.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You're not allowed to use props.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, the report that I talked about—oh, that's a prop. Down it goes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not a prop. I'm just showing you the report. Can I do that? Down it goes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Not good. You know what? We're not going to argue about this. I win.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want that other guy back.

Anyway, so I asked him to look at that report. When this legislation first came out, the minister went on and on about how big it was, and in-depth and broad. When I started to ask him a couple of questions, he kind of tried to belittle my questions by saying, "Why don't you come and have a briefing?" We got a briefing from the minister. They brought in four guys and gave us a briefing of how long, I ask the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka? He was there, what, about 30 minutes? A briefing on an act that's 65 pages long. But maybe he should read that report, because all of the stuff in that report comes from the government's own agencies and the government's own reports. It comes from the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority. That was that thing under Bill 100 that Dwight Duncan brought out and said it was going to be a virtual agency, and now it's as big as—it's so big, I can't even put a name on it. It's as big as that Godzilla guy I was telling you about earlier. It's humongous.

Where else did they get their figures? The IPSP, the only one that's current. I know the minister says, "We're bringing out a new one." It will be version number, what, 4? And three years from now we'll have version number 7, I'm sure. So the IPSP. We got stuff from the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, all of the government's own—the IESO, Independent Electricity System Operator. So we got all of their own agencies providing—we didn't; London Economics went to all of their own agencies and got the information. So they're not inventing stuff. They're not taking stuff out of the air. But I would say if the minister doesn't like what we're saying as a result of that report, bring out your own. You've got the manpower. You've got the people. Show us where they're wrong. Show us where you're wrong, or be quiet and tell the truth. Just say that you were wrong from the start and admit that this act is going to cost a lot of money.

The minister—I have to talk about this one. The mayor of South Algonquin, Percy Bresnahan, whom the minister earlier tried to—

Interjection: Malign?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. He tried to indicate that somehow Percy was a friend of his on this act. No, Percy's not a friend of his. You see, there's where they take people out of context and only take part of what they want. Percy Bresnahan is very much promoting the biomass end of it, which we are too. That's part of my riding. You see, people in the forestry business are like farmers. They're struggling, so they need some new opportunities. So that's what we're trying to do, help them, and that part of the act is right. Mike Brown, over there, from Manitoulin, would know the forestry business. He sends me out that great publication three or four times a year. It's a great little thing. What is it, The Working Forest? It's a great thing. So he'd understand it.

People in the forestry business are going to make energy from biomass. They have to go to the forest, get

the trees—something they can't use as lumber-grade stuff—process it, chip it up or grind it up, and make it into pellets or whatever. Of course, they'll have to transport all of this, and then they're going to produce power from that. Remember, the wind turbine just sits there and the wind blows by. There's no charge for the wind, no \$200 to pass go; it blows when it blows and it doesn't when it doesn't. You know that story. But the forestry guys, there are significant costs involved. So here's what they're going to pay for biomass: 12.2 cents. So 12.2 cents for biomass, but we'll pay up to 19 cents for wind. Again, we know where their friends are.

I want to quote Percy Bresnahan, the mayor of South Algonquin, when he came to speak to the committee:

"Today, coming on Bill 150, I do represent 100% of my council, 100% of all of my residents, and I represent our businesses that have been losing over the past two years. I went around to everyone—in a small community, you can do this—and I represent the First Nation as well.

"Just to get your attention on how serious this Bill 150 is to small communities and councils like mine for making decisions...."

He goes on to say that in the past they were giving us "more responsibilities for councils and more opportunities for us to make local decisions." Today, that decision-making power is being taken away from people like Percy Bresnahan, the council and the residents of South Algonquin.

He says, "We have the opportunity today in the standing committee to represent northern Ontario and where we're going to lose our benefits from natural resources ongoing, starting with this bill. If we take away from local councils the opportunity to make the decisions that are needed for their area to come forward in logging, tourism and recreation, we can lose by making the wrong decision." Further on, he says, "I just think that the township of South Algonquin is not the area for wind turbines to create green energy."

There's about a 70-turbine project being planned for South Algonquin. For those of you who wouldn't know the geography, that is within spitting distance of Algonquin park.

This bill gives the Minister of Energy—it makes him king; it makes him czar; it makes him whatever the hell you want to call him. But it gives him the power to actually erect wind turbines in provincial parks like Algonquin—our most storied park, where Tom Thomson used to go to paint. Can you believe it? That's the kind of power that George Smitherman wants in this bill, because he can't go halfway: He wants it all. For those of you who might have thought that Percy Bresnahan was a friend of George Smitherman's on this act, think again—not so.

One of the ironies of this act—and I know that the government services minister talked earlier about conservation. Do you know that this act could actually serve as a disincentive to conserve energy? I'm going to tell you how; I'm going to tell you why. On your hydro bill it's broken down: You've got your charge for electricity

and you've got your charge for transmission and distribution etc., but by June of next year, you'll have another 8% on that. Don't forget about that, folks. When Dalton McGuinty is finished picking your pockets, there's going to be another 8% on your hydro bill.

Anyway, let's get back to it. On your hydro bill, there are some set charges. A lot of people who have, for example, low usage of power are basically paying whether they're using electricity or not. And with the way this act is, and all of the responsibility to connect every bit of transmission, all of the new wires that will be required under this will be passed down to the rate base. So for that little couple who barely uses much electricity because they live a pretty frugal life, their bills will actually go up even though their power use goes down. The cost of paying for the infrastructure is going to be put on their shoulders; not just the users, but anybody who's—it's like paying a membership. For example, if you have a cottage and you're not there for six months, you still pay a hydro charge every month, and it can be significant. It's like being a member of the club. In order for you to be hooked up to Hydro One service, you're going to pay. So this could actually serve as a disincentive to those people, because they're actually going to be paying more to use less.

1730

So I think the minister needs to think about how he's affecting those really low users who've done their part, who have done everything they could to reduce their energy usage as much as possible. They could be penalized under this act. And do you know who those people are going to be? They're going to be those senior citizens who don't have government pensions, who don't have employment pensions, who've just got the little bit they get from old age security or whatever. They're the ones who are going to be hurt by it, on top of the fact that they're going to be hurt by that 8% tax that Dalton wants to put on your hydro bill next year—not just your hydro bill; your gas bill, your home heating bill, everything. It's pretty well going to cover everything. I'm fortunate that I probably won't require haircuts for that many more years, but everybody else is going to be paying it even on their haircuts. And I know that when the member for Peterborough is in his home county, he doesn't even want to talk about that. He doesn't even want to go to Tim Hortons anymore because it's too hard.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm there every day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He says he's there every day. Sure he is, but he's wearing a mask. Yes. He doesn't want to be talking to people in his riding about that HST. They know they've got a tiger by the tail on that one and they don't really want to get too involved in it.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Red Sullivan?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Do you know who he is?

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: One of the greatest out of Peterborough. Red Sullivan.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, there's the late Red Sullivan from my community, in Barry's Bay. Leonard "Red" Sullivan—a great guy. He was always involved in hockey.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, this is the real Red Sullivan, a great hockey star.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay.

Consumers Council of Canada—you know what they think of this bill, eh? They're not happy. You see, their job is to look out for—

Interjection: Consumers.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Consumers. Consumers. Thank you very much. See, you're catching on. But these guys over here aren't too worried about consumers. They want to make sure their friends are taken care of, but they're not worried about consumers.

Here's what Bill Huzar, president of the Consumers Council of Canada, said. There's a lot here, but again, in the interests of time we can't give you everything. I'd like to. He said, "Our first objection: The provisions of the GEA will add materially to the cost of electricity at a time when many consumers are facing economic distress. Because of the way in which our electricity system has developed and given technological differences, electricity from renewable sources is inherently more expensive than electricity from other sources. To this will be added the cost of new or reinforced facilities to connect new renewable sources to the transmission and distribution systems. The cost will be increased by the use of feed-in tariffs, which subsidize uneconomic energy sources."

They're doing their job. They're trying to look out for consumers.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business was there for the hearings as well. Judith Andrew, whom you know is a great spokesperson, is always working on behalf of small business. She was very worried about the implications and the effect of this bill and what it'll mean to small businesses, who are already struggling in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario and are going to struggle more under the current tax-and-spend regimes that they have instituted.

Did you ever hear of—and I know you have, Mr. Speaker; he's quite respected in the energy field—a gentleman by the name of Tom Adams? He doesn't like this bill either. You know what Tom says? "I'm not here representing any particular interests or client, and I'm not asking for revisions to this or that clause within the legislation. My purpose today is to plead for the withdrawal of the legislation completely."

"This bill is based on unworkable and illogical concepts. It will lead Ontario towards dramatically less efficient and more costly electricity. It will undermine the integrity of the public agencies and regulators charged with managing Ontario's electricity system." I'll go back to the quote in a minute, but that's like the OEB. This bill just basically cuts the guts out of the OEB, and that agency is there to protect electricity consumers. The minister wants to eviscerate it. "It will weaken municipal democracy. It threatens directly civil liberties by arming government with radical search and seizure powers."

They did remove them; thank you, Tom Adams, for helping us with that one. That was something that we spoke so strongly against. It was the toaster police, as we called them. But the toaster police have had their power cut off, thanks to people like Tom Adams and the Progressive Conservative caucus, and those other people who came forward and said, "Wait a minute, George. This is going too far."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Can you repeat that one again, that "far"?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Far. Rosie, you're not making fun of my English-language skills, are you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I just wanted to hear it because it sounded so nice.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay.

The benefits—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want you to listen to this closely, Mr. Government Services Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm all ears.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "The benefits of Bill 150 will flow to a handful of developers, manufacturers, contractors and, of course, their lawyers and consultants." This is Mr. Adams again. "Many of these beneficiaries would be well off and well employed without the vast wave of government aid flowing toward them." So the rich get richer and the poor get poorer under Dalton McGuinty's act.

Let me tell you a little bit just about my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law is 75 years old. The only thing she gets is that little government pension. They had a little bit of a farm years ago. Her husband is gone. She gets a little bit of a pension, a wee tiny bit of CPP. She's 75 years old and she still goes out and cleans houses to make ends meet at 75 years old. She still goes out to work and cleans houses, and that's what she's got to do in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. She'll be doing a whole lot more under this Green Energy Act and she'll be doing a whole lot more with your 8% GST on her hydro and her heating. This government has to rethink this act. They've got to get it right. Please, do something.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we do the questions and comments, I wish to inform the House that the request from the member from Durham for an adjournment debate today has been withdrawn and, as such, when we adjourn at 6 o'clock, we won't be doing the late show.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I always enjoy the remarks by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. He knows we have a love-hate relationship around a couple of issues.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What is it today, Rosie?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are times when we are tight and there are times when we're not so tight.

Mr. John Yakabuski: From tight to fight.

1740

Mr. Rosario Marchese: From tight to pugilistic. But I want to tell you—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Tell us what you think.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —I really don't like it when the Minister of Energy goes after you. He says you guys are just—that you support coal—

Mr. John Yakabuski: So today, is it loves or gloves, Rosie? What is it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Let me finish.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's going to be a gentle little comment, really.

I'm against nuclear; you know that, and he never stands up to say, "I'm so happy that the Conservative Party is with us on the nuclear question." He never says that. I want you to articulate your position in that regard, because I think that George Smitherman, the minister, needs to know your position. I think that the two of you are really tight on that one.

Now, you can comment on coal all you like. He always criticizes you about things that he may not like about you, but he doesn't praise you for the things that he supports and that you support. I think you have to make it clear. You just have to put it out and say, "George, we are like this on nuclear; we're tight," and explain why you think nuclear is good and why you think nuclear may overshadow and override a whole lot of this other stuff about renewable energy. Talk about that a little bit, if you can.

I know that you don't have a lot of time; you only have two minutes. But the Liberals will have very little to say, so focus on my remarks. You'll have a full two minutes to explain your position, because I get tired of the Minister of Energy attacking you all the time. I really do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to comment on the Minister of Energy's critic, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

If folks are watching the Legislature today, I want to remind them that we are now in third reading debate on this important piece of legislation. We've come out of debate and gone back into debate after hearing from many individuals and groups over many days, with respect to consultations.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And what did they say? Did you accept any amendments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Let me speak to that. Yes, we did accept a number of the amendments and suggestions that came through committee. Some amendments came from the Conservative Party. What we have done is we removed leased property from the home energy audit requirements. We provided a voluntary opt-out provision. We removed the inspection and search provisions related to home energy audits and minimum energy efficiency standards. These are the things that the member asked for in earlier debate.

Of the amendments that the NDP called for, this is what we've done:

—clarified the procurement directives under the new directive authority, to focus only on renewable energy efficiency and conservation, and not on nuclear;

—ensured that the environmental commissioner can meet the responsibilities under the Green Energy Act; and

—ensured that the information and documentation related to the development and conservation targets is transparent and publicly available.

We also heard from AMO and municipalities and a number of organizations with respect to the plan to streamline the approvals process. We have established a working group, and we will continue to work with them.

The point is that hearings are important. A lot of important perspectives were raised, and a lot of voices were heard by the committee, including that of Don McCabe, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who said: "Ontario farmers are ready to do their part to produce green energy while putting food on the shelves.... The Green Energy Act is"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: In his presentation, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke made reference to a report from London Economics International. I've just been wading through this report. It's about 70 pages, here. It's a report that came out—

Interjection: It's 72.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Seventy-two pages, is it?

Interjection: Sixty-seven. Wow.

Mr. Toby Barrett: No, I think it's closer to 72. Anyway, there are a lot of numbers in this report. It came out very recently, on April 30 this year.

The problem that we have—and I've been hearing this locally—is we have no idea from this government how much all of this is going to cost. It took, what, 72 pages to do somewhat of an analysis of what this is going to cost the average electricity consumer in Ontario. Estimates range somewhere—and they give the gross figures first—between \$18 billion and \$46 billion between the years 2010 and 2025. These are cumulative, non-discounted costs before considering the additional cost related to the infamous energy audit. I understand that range there may be \$300 to \$400, and the cost of having someone prepare an energy conservation plan.

I'm very concerned. We've gone through public hearings, and I'm sure these cost figures were bandied about by a number of the presenters. We can't seem to get these figures from this government. The costs that I just talked about are the equivalent of somewhere between approximately two to six hydro bills—two to six additional monthly electricity bills. Essentially, that works out to an average increase of about 15% a year. Add to that cost a year from now 8% because of the Dalton sales tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I always find the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke entertaining—a little silly sometimes, but generally entertaining.

I want to say that in my capacity as Minister of Government Services, I meet all kinds of people who want to own the world, but I don't meet that many people who

want to save it. I want to just say for the record that George Smitherman's one of those who gets it, who wants to work hard to make sure that the consumers we're protecting are not just the consumers today, but my kids and their kids, consumers of the future and the planet we're trying to save.

There's an old folk song. I won't sing it—but one of you're better at singing these sorts of things—but I think the refrain is,

How many times can a man turn his head

Pretending he just doesn't see?

I listened to the member opposite. He's a wind tester; he's got his index finger up in the air, testing the wind. He's trying to find anybody who's got anything critical to say, but you know what? He's not a wind changer. Real leaders are wind changers; they're not just wind testers. I've got to tell you that a wind changer is somebody who's prepared to stand in their place and be instructive and constructive, not just rant, right? You were critical about just about everybody—and I understand that. As you said, that's part of your job. But I want to just end by saying,

How many times can a man turn his head

Pretending he just doesn't see?

The final refrain is,

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,

The answer is blowin' in the wind.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: I don't recall that we would have ministers of the government come in here and make fun of our member speaking, who's serious. Also, another minister called him silly. I think this is appalling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I don't find that there's a valid point of privilege.

I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the member for Trinity–Spadina, the parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and, of course, the Minister of Government Services.

Now I'm going to touch on the Minister of Government Services's remarks. We don't want to be viewed as being negative all the time, but we do want to get the facts out. Before he starts talking about George Smitherman saving the world, let's get some facts out there.

He's talking about greenhouse gases. He's talking about the environment. Ontario produces less than 1%—less than 1%—of the world's greenhouse gases. If we stopped operating today, China would more than doubly replace what we stopped producing within six months. So if you want to save the world, Minister, you'd better start talking to those developing countries, emerging countries, emerging economies like China and India to do something about their emissions, because they are doing more to hurt the world than we could ever do to help it. We're not big enough. But the reality is that in Ontario, we also have to compete against those economies. If

you're going to bring in legislation that makes our manufacturers, our businesses and our producers less able to compete, then we're not going to be in a position to save this world or any other world. We have to be healthy. Our economies have to be working for us to be successful, to be able to do those things.

1750

I want to finish by making it abundantly clear how much the Progressive Conservative Party believes in a clean environment. In fact, it was our minister who ordered the shutdown of Lakeview. So when they impugn our motives, I take that personally.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity again to speak to the third reading of Bill 150.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's a healthy yawn. Who did that yawn over there? I can't tell you. Do you see the excitement that he exudes in this House? Hey, it's a big yawn.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But they've got to let you speak; they've got to give you more time to speak, for God's sake. Two minutes is not enough for you. When the clock turns, you've got to get your opportunity to speak, my friend, otherwise this is going to be tough. That was my friend Bill Mauro from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mauro, yes. What did I say? I said Mauro, Bill Mauro.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, I know how to pronounce Italian names. Anyway, I don't want to focus on the yawn. The issue is Bill 150.

It's third reading and yes, we need to shift rapidly to a greener energy and electricity supply for many reasons, particularly and most importantly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, in my view, to reduce our reliance on coal and nuclear energy—yes, reduce our reliance on coal and nuclear. There was strong support for the aim of the bill to shift electricity supply towards renewable energy.

My point is, how strongly is the government committed to that? I'm telling you that the commitment of this government is toward nuclear and nothing else. Yes, you can say all you want and you can say, "Oh, this is revolutionary and we are committed to renewable energy," but you are committed just a tiny little bit. That's not enough. A little bit is not a lot, and to make a tiny little bit "revolutionary" is nonsensical. Nobody will believe you except those who don't read, who don't follow anything by way of facts, except the facts given by the government.

But, by and large, your commitment is to nuclear. Your commitment is to open up two new nuclear stations at a cost of anywhere from \$20 billion, \$30 billion, \$40 billion and up, and we don't even know the cost. When you include in that the cost overruns, who knows what

it's going to cost? But do you ever hear George, the Minister of Energy, talk about nuclear? Hardly ever. It's as if his lips are sealed, as if he is being controlled by the Premier, by the staff, by the caucus not to mention nuclear. How many times have you heard George Smitherman, the minister, talk about nuclear? Never.

He doesn't want to talk about it. He wants to talk about the revolution that he has caused with Bill 150 and the excitement around that with all the environmental people and everybody else thinking, "We are moving to renewable energy." He's actually got a whole lot of Liberal MPPs convinced that we're doing that, because they're a whole lot of cheerleaders. Here on my left and across from me they're cheerleaders. The government and the minister need you as cheerleaders, constantly; do you see all the questions that are asked by the rump and others on a daily basis? It's tiring, but all these questions come from the rump: "Explain, Minister, how great we're doing with renewable. Could you tell us more about Bill 150?" Those are the kinds of questions you get from the rump and others, and I don't mean to discriminate against the rump in any way, because I've got a whole lot of friends on this side; I do.

But I want George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy, to talk about his love for nuclear, how he embraces it. Why doesn't he say more about it, and why don't the members speak about this particular issue?

I want you in your two minutes—if not today, another day, because there's always another day to talk about how clean nuclear is. I love to hear Tories and Liberals talk about—because you do, don't you?—how clean nuclear is. Could you explain? I know you don't have two minutes now because I just started, and we're on live. It's five to 6. We're not going to get an opportunity to get a two-minute rebuttal, so it's a shame for the citizens watching. But I want you to stand up the next day when I come back and do my 10 minutes and tell me how clean nuclear is. No one in the rump, against whom I'm not discriminatory—or the members in front of me, with whom I have a wonderful relationship—ever explains the issue of nuclear.

You understand that nuclear is deadly. For those of you who haven't been paying attention, nuclear is radioactive. Michael, it's radioactive for 10,000 long years. Do you know how long that is, 10,000? It's longer than your lifetime and mine and your children and their children.

Speaker, I need to do something. I'm going to ask you now, before the time is up. I need unanimous consent to defer the lead. Our critic is not here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Trinity-Spadina has sought unanimous consent of the House to defer the lead-off speech. Agreed? Agreed. I return to the member.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Do you see the love I have with Tories and Liberals, how it works?

Mr. John Yakubuski: You were testing them, weren't you, Rosie?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It works.

Mr. John Yakubuski: You knew I'd agree.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I knew you would.

Interjection: You never say "pecunia" anymore.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I did today. I use the "pecunia" on a regular basis, and today particularly I mentioned it two or three times and nobody responded in the Liberal quarters. I'm not going to refer to you as the rump. It's not a fair term. You're absolutely right.

It's radioactive, that stuff, and it lives for 10,000 long years. Would you touch that stuff? Would you have it in your backyard for safe storage and for safekeeping? Would you keep it there and say, "Not a problemo. It's clean"?

Mr. John Yakubuski: No problem for me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You should stand up in this Legislature and say, "Give it to me. I'll put it in my backyard for safe storage." There is no Liberal who will stand up and say, "Radioactive is clean enough that I'm going to have it in my basement, I'm going to have it in my bedroom and I'm going to have it in my vegetable garden." Not one Liberal is going to stand up and do that. Radioactive for 10,000 years; plutonium is another by-product of this—deadly chemicals that kill people. How can such deadly chemicals be called "clean"? Something is wrong with anyone saying that that kind of stuff is clean, when it kills you, maims you.

You're going to have lots of time to respond to what I've been saying. I want you to stand up and say, "Yeah, we know nuclear's going to cost about \$40 billion, not including cost overruns, but we're up for the task. We think it's okay, and we think it's good for the citizens and taxpayers to pay up for the next lifetime, yours, mine and your children's." We have been paying for Darlington for the last 20 years and more. The next nuclear reactors we're going to be building: Your children are going to be paying for them for a whole lifetime. What do you think of that?

Mr. Dave Levac: What do you think of the bill?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What do I think of the bill? The bill limits the amount of renewable energy de facto, merely by the fact that you've concluded, you've said and you've decided that you're going to have two nuclear stations. You have basically limited how much renewables you're going to put in the system, and you can nod all you like.

You're going to have two minutes and 20 minutes. By the way, you should use all of your 20 minutes to explain yourselves. You say no, but there's only so much energy you can have in the system. By the way, in the last little while some of you have been reading—and I'm sure you are—and you've noticed there's been a drop in consumption. So then you put on board two more nuclear stations, and how much renewable are you going to put on board when you've got these two new nuclear stations coming? I think you understand what I'm saying. You have put a cap on renewables, a ceiling—you understand?—and it's limited, so you are doing a tiny little bit of—you're looking to stand. I could see the way you're seated in your chair.

Interjection: Fifteen seconds.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I can come back. Not a problem. I'll come back. Thank you very much. To the citizens of Ontario, we'll come back another day.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Concert in Thunder Bay	
Mr. Bill Mauro	6558
Taxation	
Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde	6558
Poverty	
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6559
Consideration of Bill 174	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6559

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009, Bill 175, Mr. Milloy / Loi ontarienne de 2009 sur la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre, projet de loi 175, M. Milloy	
First reading agreed to	6560
Municipal Residential and Commercial Surge Protector Act, 2009, Bill 176, Mr. Lalonde / Loi de 2009 sur l'installation de parasurtenseurs résidentiels et commerciaux dans les municipalités, projet de loi 176, M. Lalonde	
First reading agreed to	6560
M. Jean-Marc Lalonde	6560

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Labour mobility / Mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre	
Hon. John Milloy	6560
Emergency preparedness	
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	6561
Asian and South Asian Heritage Month	
Hon. Michael Chan	6562
Labour mobility	
Mr. Jim Wilson	6562
Emergency preparedness	
Mr. Jim Wilson	6563
Asian and South Asian Heritage Month	
Mr. Peter Shurman	6563
Labour mobility	
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6563
Asian and South Asian Heritage Month	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6564
Visitor	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6564
Notice of dissatisfaction	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6564

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Taxation	
Mr. Jim Wilson	6564
Community safety	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	6565
Road safety	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	6565
Route 17/174	
M. Jean-Marc Lalonde	6565
Health care	
Mr. Robert Bailey	6565
Employment insurance	
Mr. Mike Colle	6566
Taxation	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	6566
School facilities	
Mr. Phil McNeely	6566
Taxation	
Mr. Jim Wilson	6566
Lupus	
Mr. Kim Craitor	6567
Taxation	
Mr. Robert Bailey	6567
Ontario budget	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	6567
Gasoline prices	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	6567

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009, Bill 150, Mr. Smitherman / Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et l'économie verte, projet de loi 150, M. Smitherman	
Hon. George Smitherman	6568
Ms. Laurel C. Broten	6569
Mr. Norm Miller	6571
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6571
Mr. Phil McNeely	6572
Mr. Robert Bailey	6572
Ms. Laurel C. Broten	6572
Mr. John Yakabuski	6573
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6580
Ms. Laurel C. Broten	6581
Mr. Toby Barrett	6581
Hon. Ted McMeekin	6581
Mr. John Yakabuski	6582
Mr. Rosario Marchese	6582
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	6584

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 5 May 2009 / Mardi 5 mai 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Toxics Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 167, Mr. Gerretsen / Loi de 2009 sur la réduction des toxiques, projet de loi 167, M. Gerretsen

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6539
Mr. Howard Hampton	6542
Mr. Robert Bailey	6542
Mr. Toby Barrett	6542
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6543
Mr. Howard Hampton	6543
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6545
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6546
Mr. Howard Hampton	6546
Second reading agreed to	6546

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Sylvia Jones	6546
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	6546
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	6546
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6547
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6547

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario economy

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6547
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6547

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	6547
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6548

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6548
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6548

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6549
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	6549

Tobacco industry

Mr. Toby Barrett	6550
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6550

Pension plans

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6550
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6550

Hours of work

Mr. Bruce Crozier	6551
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	6551

Wine industry

Mr. Randy Hillier.....	6551
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	6552

Senior citizens

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6552
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	6552

Children's mental health services

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis	6553
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6553

Public transit

Mr. Frank Klees	6553
Hon. George Smitherman.....	6553

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue	6554
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	6554

Sports funding

Mr. David Zimmer	6555
Hon. Margaret R. Best	6555

Driver licences

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6555
Hon. James J. Bradley	6555

Highway interchange

Mme France Gélinas	6556
Hon. James J. Bradley	6556

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Taxation

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	6557
-------------------------	------

Art exhibition

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	6557
--------------------------	------

Ranae tenBrinke

Mr. Toby Barrett	6557
------------------------	------

Condominium association

Mr. Rosario Marchese	6557
----------------------------	------

Cinco de Mayo

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6558
---------------------	------

School transportation funding

Mr. Ted Arnott	6558
----------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
X1
-D23

Government
Publications



No. 146

N° 146

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

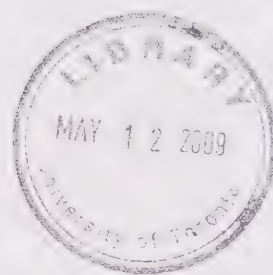
First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Wednesday 6 May 2009

Mercredi 6 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DE LA PAUVRETÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 152, An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario / *Projet de loi 152, Loi concernant une stratégie à long terme de réduction de la pauvreté en Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: On the last occasion, I was mid-speech when the time ran out. I see I still have approximately 15 minutes left; I don't think I'll use all of that today.

Just to reiterate what I had said on the last occasion, because I know there will be some new members here in the House, I started my speech off by thanking the minister and the parliamentary assistant for the work that they did around this bill and for their efforts in making it a better bill. In fact, I pointed out how many amendments were accepted within the bill, and that when you look at a copy of Bill 152 today, and the way it is done around this Legislature with the different font, you can see how many changes, page after page, were actually made.

I went on to talk to them about some of the changes that I was very happy to see. There were a great many of them; I listed them. Then, of course, in my job as critic, I also have to say where I thought the bill had fallen down, and I spoke to that for some extended period of time.

I would just like to close today by going back to where I think the bill could have been a better bill, and I'm saying this for the future, not for today. It is the intention of New Democrats to vote for this bill when it comes for a vote, either later today or on some subsequent day in the future. It is our intention to vote for it, but I do want to state for the record that at some point this bill will be brought back before this House. Whether it is brought back in this Parliament, whether it is brought back in a subsequent Parliament, whether it is brought back by this

government or a subsequent government, it will have to be brought back, and changes will have to be made.

I am speaking to the future now, about what I think those changes are that need to be made, because a good bill can be a better bill. A bill that sets out with a future standard of making Ontario the first jurisdiction or one of the best jurisdictions in the world when it comes to poverty can be made a bill that actually eliminates poverty and sets a standard that is higher than what we are willing to set here today in this Parliament and with this government.

I say this in terms of the future—not in terms of today, but in terms of the future—because I know that the bill is intended to encumber future governments. Even though you cannot do that, that is what the intent of this bill is: to set out a standard, or a minimum standard, so that every government that follows from this one, whether it be a Liberal government, a Conservative government, a New Democratic government or some other government, will have to look at the bill, will have to follow it and will have to give service to it.

What I am saying to them and to subsequent governments is that we need to go further. We need to have the goal of poverty elimination. It is not simply enough to be the first or the best jurisdiction in the world. We have to have the goal of poverty elimination, because if it is simply to reduce it and to reduce it over time, that is not what we should be looking for. That is not what Quebec looks for; it's not what other jurisdictions around the world look for. They see an end to poverty, and we should be looking to that end as well.

The second thing is that we should start to look very carefully at an independent review. When we take something seriously in this Legislature, we set up independent reviews. That's why the Environmental Commissioner comes before this Legislature—not before the government, but before the Legislature—and is required once a year to table a report. That's why the Integrity Commissioner, the Ombudsman, all of those groups that we set up independently at arm's length, come forward to the Legislature once a year, so that we know that the independent review truly reflects what is happening and that the commissioner will tell us when the Legislature is failing. I think if this government and future governments are serious, we will have and encompass an independent review.

We need to ensure that the laws are meshed so that human rights laws and enforcement are part of poverty reduction, because it is in places where people suffer human rights abuse and it's in places where people do

not know their rights that poverty is endemic. I'm thinking here in terms of new immigrants, many of whom have suffered at the hands of unscrupulous employers, many of whom are not being paid their dues and their wages, many of whom struggle. Part of the reason that they're finding themselves in poverty is that human rights laws and enforcement are not adequate. So that should, too, in the future be part of the bill.

I am talking in terms of the future as well in setting minimum yearly targets, because it is against that which we must be measured. It is simply not enough to say we have reduced poverty a smidgen or we have reduced it in some small way in the past year, because this year was difficult. Everyone is going to say, "In a difficult year, it's not possible to do it." I can see governments in the future saying that, and that is not what should be happening. We should be setting a minimum, and if that minimum is as low as a 3% reduction, then that should be the floor under which no future government could ever fall. So in good years, it would be possible to reduce poverty by 5% or 6% or 7%, but even in bad years there should be a minimum floor, and I'm suggesting that should be 3%.

In future bills, when future parliaments look at how to change it, there should also be the use of disaggregated data so that we can understand who continues to be in poverty. There is no question today that people who live in poverty tend to be new immigrants. They tend to be people of colour. They tend to be First Nations. They tend to be women and they tend to be children. We need that kind of data so that we know where we are being successful and where we're not being successful, so that in the future, if we are able to eliminate most forms of child poverty, we can turn our attention to other groups and other areas.

We need to have an anti-racism and employment equity directorate as well that can comment on the reduction of poverty.

And last but not least, in terms of this government and future governments, there has to be a will around the budget. This bill cannot stand alone; it will never stand alone. We cannot legislate an end to poverty without putting the necessary funds and programs in place that will do it, so that every subsequent budget, starting next March, has to have the monies available. Future governments have to understand that if poverty is to remain a commitment and a goal to all of the parties in this House, and however future governments feel they are encumbered on it, there has to be money set aside. It is no good talking about the elimination of poverty unless you're willing to build affordable housing. It's no good talking about the elimination of poverty unless you're willing to raise ODSP rates and Ontario Works rates, because they are not liveable, and the people who are forced to live on them cannot ever hope to escape from poverty. You cannot end poverty unless you are willing to stop the claw-back of so many government programs, and that is going to cost the government some money as well. You cannot end poverty unless you're going to build daycares and

things that will help women to get out of poverty, to go back to school and to get jobs.

0910

All of these things are going to cost money, and we need to make sure that governments of all stripes feel that this is a worthwhile goal and that it is reflected in the budget, and particularly that it is reflected in budgets in times like these, which we know are going to be tough. Next year's budget is going to be every bit as difficult as and perhaps more difficult than the one we've just gone through. Unless governments are willing to do that, then this bill will be an empty shell, because it will stand for something that is not going to happen. I think this is the true test of this Legislature, and it will be the true test of future governments.

Having said that, those would be the comments that I have. It is a bill that we are going to vote for. It has had many amendments which we are proud that we had a part in. We are very proud of the groups that came forward: the 25 in 5 Network and all of those who made deputations, all of those who pushed the government so hard over the last year and a half. The results have finally been borne out.

We are going to vote for it. We are critical, in part because we are New Democrats first and we want more, but we also look to the future. We look to the future of what governments can expect to do, and I am hoping, in my lifetime, to see the elimination of poverty in this province.

As I started out my speech the other day, as a boy from Regent Park, I grew up with that poverty. I grew up with it around me. I have seen it my whole life. I have seen it at Jane and Finch; I have seen it on First Nations communities across this whole province; I have seen it continuing in Regent Park, although they are redeveloping and it is getting better; and I have seen it on many of the streets in this city and other streets where children simply don't have enough.

We can eliminate poverty. We must eliminate poverty. I want this bill to pass, but I also want to state for the record that in this government and future governments of which I hope, perhaps, to be a part, I am going to be watching to make sure that every single budget does exactly what this bill demands and that we can in our lifetimes see an end to poverty, not just for children, but for every single person who suffers it daily.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on third reading of Bill 152, which the government calls the Poverty Reduction Act.

We had two days of hearings on this bill, which provided a lot of thoughtful and meaningful input from agencies and groups concerned about poverty in Ontario. None of the amendments that the government made to this bill have led me to believe it will be an effective tool to fight poverty. The government has successfully passed the old test of "First, do no harm," but they have forgotten that they should follow up with "Do some good."

The committee presentations demonstrated that groups that fight poverty are in support of this bill. I have wondered why they support a bill that will not directly pull a single person out of poverty. I think it comes down to hope. This government is very good at offering hope without substance.

I spoke in second reading about the government's predisposition to gesture politics, making sure they stay on the right side of an issue without actually doing anything about the issue. All this bill offers is more gesture politics. It is designed so that those Ontarians who truly want to fight poverty will see hope in its name and in its goals. The only problem is that the bill is empty. It's like one of those chocolate bunnies kids get at Easter that has a thin layer of chocolate and inside is hollow—empty.

Fighting poverty does not take legislation. It takes political will and good research, and it takes money. The government offers only a bill that requires a plan and annual reports written by the minister herself. These reports allow the government to tell everyone what a great job they've done. It's like letting a student write his own report card. Where is the accountability?

If the government believes that legislation is the way to fight poverty, why do they not require any independent review of their poverty plan? Why will the bill not allow this House to review and debate the annual reports? In committee, presenters repeatedly called for accountability. I would like to review some of what they said.

Let me begin with the Family Service Toronto, Ontario Campaign 2000: "Our eighth suggestion relates to the annual report on poverty reduction. We're suggesting that it should not just be posted on the website, as currently appears in the bill, but that it should be tabled in the Legislature within 60 days of completion in order to ensure public debate, public discussion and public awareness of the very important annual report on how we are doing in achieving the goals of poverty reduction set out in the strategy.

"Our ninth suggestion for an amendment is around the review of the poverty reduction strategy. We would like to see an independent review of the poverty reduction strategy happen at least every five years—not the minister doing the review, but an independent body that would be appointed by the Legislature. This follows on some of our research as to what happens in the European Union, where independent experts conduct peer reviews of each country's national action plan for poverty reduction and social inclusion....

"Our 10th suggested amendment is that the independent body doing that review consult with the public, in particular, low-income people.

"Our 11th suggested amendment is to ensure that the new poverty reduction strategy that is developed be based on the findings of that independent review and be tabled in a timely fashion. We're suggesting within four months of the tabling of the review of the report."

Ms. Jacquie Maund reported: "We're suggesting that someone be appointed, possibly an officer of the Legislature, who would conduct a review, clearly in consul-

tation with interested stakeholders. He or she would require some funding to do that, to hold consultations, and we would like to see those be held around the province, not only in Toronto, so that people have an opportunity to provide comment, to provide input and then, of course, that there be a timeline around that review and that the document be public and then be tabled in the Legislature for public discussion."

From the Chiefs of Ontario, Grand Chief Randall Phillips, speaking about the consultation on this bill, said the following: "There was no concerted effort with respect to addressing any of this strategy, any of these discussions in terms of how it was going to deal with and potentially impact and benefit First Nations communities. That's what we've been saying for many, many years, that within our First Nations governance structures, we have an idea and a sense in terms of how to address these issues, how to look at them and how to really deal with them in a serious way to benefit our people. But it's an example like this where we've just been totally ignored with respect to how does the strategy move forward and how we are included.

"So, yes, it is an insult with respect to First Nations communities. It is my task as the chair of the chiefs committee on social and child welfare to address these matters with people like yourself who make these decisions. There is an impact with us. We're trying to say that we need to be involved. We're trying to say that we can form solutions and work together on this. That has not occurred, and I think that's the message that I'm trying to bring here right now: Without our inclusion, there are going to be some serious challenges with respect to how we move this bill forward and some serious challenges with respect to the intent of the bill."

0920

The Association of Ontario Health Centres also made similar comments: "While the poverty reduction strategy speaks to the importance of measuring progress with specific indicators, and Bill 152 refers to targets, the legislation currently lacks the teeth necessary to ensure that those targets are sufficiently substantive....

"Accountability is key to our common goal to reduce and eliminate poverty in this province. Reporting must be regular, its processes transparent and accessible. Consultation must be real so that your partners in this project, people living in poverty and organizations who are their voices, can see that their input has been taken seriously. This means reporting that is timely. It also means review and mechanisms of evaluation that are meaningful across the social determinants of health. Indicators must include income, education, health, housing and standard of living, amongst others, if we are to get an accurate measurement of success, or not. Evaluation must also be timely, independent and thorough. AOHC recommends that the work of the Provincial Auditor be expanded to include an exhaustive five-year review of the strategy then in effect."

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction added, "We would note, however, that this process which you've undertaken for these public hearings on this bill

was a bit restrictive to those individuals who will be most impacted by the legislation—people living with low and limited income.”

The Income Security Advocacy Centre for the 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction made similar comments, and Mary Marrone began by saying, “I think you start by appointing an independent body. Precisely how that’s done—there are a number of options. There’s the Public Appointments Secretariat; the minister could appoint. But it needs to be somebody who has the confidence of the low-income community and the people of Ontario.” Ms. Sarah Blackstock added, “And that’s precisely why we’ve called for the reports to be tabled in the Leg. We have other recommendations that specify some of the indicators that we would like to be used to measure poverty. So absolutely, those are key amendments that need to be addressed so that we can continue to build.”

Sister Pauline Lally, from the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, added, “In the end, it will be up to groups like those appearing before you today and tomorrow to hold future governments accountable. If future governments are to continue the work of poverty reduction, groups like our Kingston vigil keepers need regular and reliable yardsticks by which Ontario’s progress in the area of poverty reduction can be measured....

“We need an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly who can report on the state of the social environment. We need this social Ombudsman who can prepare the annual reports on progress in poverty reduction already stipulated in Bill 152. These reports must be independent from the government of the day. They must be delivered to the Legislature every year. This will allow groups like ourselves to praise and/or pressure future governments. This, as you know more than I, is the stuff of politics....

“We hear a lot these days about two words. They inform public discussion of government policy, including social policy. Those two words are ‘accountability’ and ‘transparency.’ We hear them in our congregation too. They are repeated so often that sometimes it seems we lose sight of their importance.

“We believe our suggestions for improving Bill 152 reflect the need for future governments to be accountable with respect to poverty reduction and transparent in measuring progress towards that important goal.”

The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, represented by Mr. John Rae, added the following: “We also call upon a clear, understandable and transparent process of review. Part of that must involve tabling all reports before the Legislature. That will give the citizens of this province an opportunity to judge what progress has been and is being made. It will also remind all members of the Legislature what progress has been and is being made so you, who are members of the House, will not forget that poverty must be a part of your everyday thought process and everyday work. It must not be confined to the work of this committee; it must not be confined to this bill. It must be part of everything the government of Ontario does.”

From the March of Dimes, Ms. Bobby Moore said, “We feel that section 5, under the title ‘Regular Consultation,’ is not specific enough. We feel that there should be clearly established time frames as a starting point for regular consultation, then an additional provision of additional times to meet, as considered appropriate by the minister. We recommend that specific reference be made to the following: an annual meeting of an advisory body, with cabinet representation, be charged with identifying the champion programs or services that sector and cabinet representatives deem most effective in tackling and alleviating poverty.”

Houselink Community Homes: “Currently, the bill asks a minister to undertake a review every five years. We support the idea of there being a regular review; that’s great. However, we believe that if this review is to be effective and impartial, it should be undertaken by a body that’s independent of the government. It makes no sense for the government to review itself. Furthermore, this independent body that will conduct the review should include those who are closest to the issue, including those who have the direct experience of poverty, as well as organizations who work on the front line.”

“Community Living Ontario endorses the recommendations of the 25 in 5 network, providing for regular reviews of the progress on poverty reduction by an independent body reporting to the Legislature. These reviews should include the direct involvement of people who live in poverty, as well as organizations which work to reduce poverty.

“We recommend that all references to reviews of the poverty reduction strategy be amended to provide for the review of the strategy by a body independent of government that is comprised in part by people who have an intellectual disability.”

The Canadian Union of Public Employees calls “on the government to add real targets, standards and recommendations into the legislation to make it necessary to ensure the implementation of real poverty reduction strategies. Such targets, standards and recommendations should be established with the Poverty Reduction Act through a series of broad and regular consultations with stakeholders, including those people living with poverty across the province.”

Voices From the Street: “We also recommend that the government appoint an independent body that shall review the strategy the government has chosen. The review needs to take place sometime between year three and no later than year four. This review must be completed within a specified timeline; we would recommend a maximum of six months. The review must be tabled in the Legislature within 60 days of the review’s completion.

“We would also like to recommend that the government always include those with lived experience to be part of this review. We also feel that Bill 152 needs to be amended so that a consultation includes stakeholders, all other levels of government, members of the public and non-profit sector, business and those who have experience of living in poverty.”

"In terms of accountability," the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses said, "we agree with the presenters already here that we need a transparent and objective review and evaluation of any poverty reduction strategy in the government, and we also need that report to be provided within the Legislature for full public debate."

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario concluded: "Within four years of the release of *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, an independent person or group should be appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation and effectiveness ... of transparency and credibility. It is essential that a meaningful consultation process be initiated so that those who have direct experience with poverty and social exclusion would be encouraged and would have the opportunity to fully participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of the poverty reduction strategy. In fact, we should make the mechanisms such that they will be supported to participate. The government will then be able to issue a revised long-term poverty reduction strategy for Ontario based on" that review.

0930

The Canadian Mental Health Association regarded regular reviews as essential to ensure that the reduction targets remain timely, relevant and effective. Again, we recommend that an independent body of stakeholders be appointed by the government to lead the review. This will ensure that any new strategies and revisions align with the identified needs of those it is intended to serve.

The majority of the submissions in committee had a common theme: accountability. Many called for an independent review of the plan and your annual reports, maybe because although they support this bill, they're really concerned about the question of whether you actually try to reduce poverty. Maybe they do not believe that your annual reports will make any difference. If these anti-poverty groups trusted you, they would not have asked over and over again for independent reviews of your poverty plan. I offered the committee an amendment to require that the annual reports promised in this bill go to a legislative committee for review and public hearings. The Liberal majority on the committee, of course, voted it down. It means that after the minister tables her annual report in the House, the government does not have to do anything.

A lot of space is taken up in the bill with a list of disadvantaged groups that suffer from poverty. This follows a list of noble sentiments about how poverty is a bad thing. I am not opposed to noble sentiments, but none of them mean anything in reality. The only thing that has real meaning is action. Action means creative ideas and the money to pay for them.

The Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, led by Roger Martin and originally set up by the Ontario government, reported in 2007 on ways to fight poverty. They identified who is at risk and what should be done. They wrote, "Poverty is concentrated among six high-

risk groups—high school dropouts, recent immigrants, lone parents, unattached individuals between the ages of 45 and 64, the disabled, and aboriginals. Individuals in these groups are much more likely to be at the bottom end of Ontario's income distribution and are more likely to live in poverty. To help these people, we need greater investments in their skills and capabilities. These can be funded more easily if Ontario achieves its prosperity potential."

I would encourage all members of this House to read their report. If the government had read their report in 2007 when it came out, they could have already taken action. There was certainly no sign of reference to this report in committee. Poverty policies should be tailored to meet the needs of people in each of the six groups. The best way out of poverty is a good job. The best way for children out of poverty is for their parents to be able to get good jobs. Governments must design policies that emphasize education, language training and other means that suit the needs of individuals. No one wants to be poor. Thousands are seeking a way out. They are looking for hope. The Poverty Reduction Act may appear to provide hope, but it is somewhat of an illusion.

I want to finish by saying that I know there has been a great deal of concern about support for this bill. I want to reinforce the fact that we are supporting the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, okay. You were a bit slow, but go ahead.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As the member has pointed out, this bill does precious little to solve the problem of poverty. In fact, I think the title of this bill is wrong. It says it's a long-term strategy to reduce poverty. I think in a country like Canada, which is among the richest countries in the world, even the people who are in poverty live in the top 90th percentile of the people in the world. The people in this House, I dare say, are living in the top 98th percentile of the people in the world. A country that is this rich should not be satisfied with reducing poverty. The title of this bill should be to eliminate poverty.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I don't find eliminating poverty a laughing matter. I'm absolutely amazed that the government would find some humour in the fact that someone wanted to eliminate poverty. We are a rich enough country to be able to do that. This is a very sad day for Ontario when this government finds such humour in the fact that someone stands in their place here and says that we should eliminate poverty. We are a rich enough country to be able to accomplish that goal.

I feel sorry for the poor people of this province when they have that government looking after their best interests and bringing this bill in that is going to do precious little—next to nothing—to eliminate the restrictions of poverty in which people find themselves in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. The member for York-Simcoe, you have two minutes to respond. Oh, Mr. Miller. Sorry. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to reiterate my colleague's comments that we will be supporting this bill. However, I only have one thing to say and it's going to be quick.

The bottom line is that there have been a lot of studies done, there has been a lot of input from community groups and other people, and only thing I can say is, put the dollar where the bill is. We'll see in the next two or three years in budgets how much money actually goes out the door and into the hands of the people who need it. I've heard a lot of talk and a lot of meetings and all that, but I guess the proof is in the pudding. We'll see. When the cheques start going out to the people who need them, then that's when I will believe it. I mean, we can talk all we want, we can make promises and a nice, pretty bill, but if the people don't get the resources, if they don't get the money and if they don't get the help, then it is a wasted effort.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: That old biblical story about Saul on the road to Damascus I think can apply this morning. I remember chairing social services in Peterborough as a city councillor when we got the notification that ODSP and OW rates were going to be slashed by 21% by the Harris government and their cronies, when we got the message that minimum wage was going to be frozen for eight long years. And they can stand up today and talk about what they want to do for people who find themselves in difficult economic circumstances in Ontario? That, without a doubt, is the biggest bunch of poppycock I've ever heard in the six years I've been in this chamber. That is absolutely atrocious, that they can stand up talking about that.

They opposed the Ontario child benefit that we're going to accelerate by two years to give those individuals a helping hand in Ontario. One of their leadership candidates came out yesterday and said, "We're going to freeze minimum wage again in the province of Ontario." And they come here today saying they're supportive of this bill? Oh my goodness. I mean, as I said, this is the Saul-on-the-road-to-Damascus story this morning. Gosh, if it's a real-life conversion, well, that'll be—

Interjection: We welcome that.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We welcome that if it's a real-life conversion. But I understand that's not the reality, when you hear those leadership candidates don't want to provide anybody in a low-income situation with a helping hand.

This is what this bill is all about. This is what this minister is all about; that, and providing the kind of leadership that's needed on this file in the province of Ontario. That's what we're looking for, to get this bill to royal assent and to move forward on this file in Ontario.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Just to tone down the rhetoric a little, we are supposed to be talking about the submission and the statements that were made by the honourable member. The attacks that are going on here—what she said was cogent, it was clear and it was good. What she was trying to say is that the people who came forward had some very real suggestions, that the government listened to some of those suggestions and that she was hopeful and mindful of them going just a little bit further.

What she said repeatedly, and I said it in my speech as well—and I think the government needs to hear it, and people who are going to come here, if there is a vote, need to hear it—is that one of the things that is missing is that there is not an independent review. I wish there had been one. I listened to what she had to say. The groups called for it and she called for it. She spoke dispassionately; she spoke well; she spoke in favour of the bill.

For comments to be on someone else who is speaking—I mean, I don't know whether that's what's supposed to be done. As speakers we have rules, and the rules are—you're supposed to confine your two-minute comment to the person who spoke. She had the lead-off speech, and I would hope in the future that all members from all sides of the House would confine themselves to speaking and to commenting on the person who has delivered either the one-hour or the 20-minute speech and not use the opportunity to attack each other.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Since the matter has been raised, I will read to the House standing order 25, which says: "Following the speech of each member, up to four members may ask questions and comment for up to two minutes each on matters relevant to the matters before the House...." It doesn't necessarily confine it to the member's comments; it's relevant to matters before the House.

Anyway, the member for York-Simcoe, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: First of all, I would like to thank the member from Beaches-East York, because I too had the same interpretation of the standing order, and I was very clear about the fact that I wanted people to understand that the amendment I put forward, which was lost, actually responded to the theme of accountability that we heard over and over again from others.

Let me just say to the member from Peterborough that, while you may remember the 21%, that was for able-bodied people. It had nothing to do with ODSP and it had nothing to do with single mothers. However, a much better response from me is the fact that 750,000 Ontarians were taken from the provincial tax rolls. That was money in their pocket, and that is the kind of creative opportunity that, if you as a caucus read Roger Martin's work on poverty, you would know that, for each of those groups that he identifies, he has very specific, tailored suggestions. So that's why I think that, in this House, I would have liked to see a demonstration of that kind of research being put into legislation, because what this bill has done is simply raised the level of expectation, frankly, amongst all Ontarians, and at the same time has not

provided an adequate avenue for consultation. There is no science behind what is suggested here.

I want to just remind—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak? Minister?

Ms. Matthews has moved third reading of Bill 152. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be taken this morning after question period, under deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Wilkinson: There is no further business this morning until question period.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further business, this House in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0945 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Visiting today at Queen's Park for Family Service Ontario day, from Catholic Family Services in Kitchener, I'm pleased to introduce Cathy Brothers, Mike Collins, Catherine Fife, Pam Mank, Karin Voisin, Jennifer Berry, Vivian Zochowski, and a person that I know well, Scott Witmer.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislature today, visiting from Thunder Bay for family services day, from the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre, the executive director, Nancy Chamberlain, and the chair of the board, Connie McLeod.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I ask all to join me in welcoming, from Catholic Family Services of Durham, Mary Wells, the executive director, as well as Elizabeth Pierce, the senior council program manager.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to introduce some people from Catholic Family Services in Hamilton: Dana Vladescu; John Henderson; Erin Forler; Wendy Brawn; Linda Dayler, the executive director; Paula Forbes; Mary Jefferson; Dana Tozier Gillespie; and Kate Sudak.

Mr. Bob Delaney: In the west visitors' gallery, I'd like to introduce an old friend, the executive director of Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin, Mark Crendon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to introduce Kevin, Nicholas, Helen and Alan Currie, all family of page Robyn.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to introduce today, in the west public gallery, two people from Peterborough: Ms. Casey Ready, who is executive director of the Community Counselling and Resource Centre in Peterborough, and Mr. Don Cumming, who is president of the board of directors for the Community Counselling

and Resource Centre in Peterborough. They are here as part of family services day at Queen's Park. We certainly give them a warm welcome.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to welcome Nancy Brown, executive director of Halton Family Services; Susan Jewett, executive director of Burlington Counselling and Family Services; as well as other members of those two great organizations who are with us today. I'd like to thank them for the great work they do for the families of Halton, and I look forward to meeting them after the session. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce Stephen Mills, president of the board of Catholic Family Services of Toronto; Lucia Furguele, executive director of Catholic Family Services of Toronto; Roz Boteng, member of the board of directors; and Mary Kennedy, a member of the board of directors. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I take great pleasure today in introducing members from the Family Counselling Centre in Sarnia, Don Pitt, their director, as well as other members, in the west members' gallery. We welcome you.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It is my privilege today to introduce Mr. Jon Thompson, who is the executive director of Community Counselling Services, which, while headquartered in Fort Frances, serves a very large area in northwestern Ontario. Welcome.

Mr. Dave Levac: Visiting us today in the House are members from the Family Counselling Centre of Brant: the president of the association, Jamie Clark, and the executive director, Shelly McCarthy. We would like to welcome them here to this House and listen carefully to what their concerns are.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Susan Gapko, who is in the east gallery today and who will be watching the proceedings. Hi, Susan.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's my pleasure to welcome Derek Thompson, the chair of the board of the Community Counselling Centre of Nipissing, and Alan McQuarrie, the executive director. We're delighted that they're here today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to introduce Mike and Charlene Brown, who are in the east lobby and who are my guests here today.

Hon. Michael Chan: This is Family Services Day at Queen's Park. I would like to welcome guests from York region to the Legislature: Mr. Elisha Laker, Dr. Patti Reed, Ms. Susan Warren, Ms. Rose Montevergin and Mr. John Munroe. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to introduce Tim Simboli, executive director of Family Services in Ottawa, and John Ellis, executive director of Family Service Ontario.

Hon. John Wilkinson: On behalf of my colleague the member for Huron-Bruce, we are both delighted to have Susan Melkert from Family Services Perth-Huron here.

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to join with my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo in recognizing the various members here from KW Counselling and Catholic

Family Counselling, and add to the list she gave from KW Counselling Debbie Young, Sherri Bean and Heidi Balsillie; and from Catholic Family Counselling, I'd like to add to the list Andrew Wilding, Jack Sehl, Larry Ryan, Megan Conway, Judy Nairn, and Ian Russell.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome students from the Froebel Education Centre in Mississauga to the Legislature.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'd like to join in welcoming members of Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County, as has been done by all of my colleagues. They are going to speak with many of us about very, very pertinent and compelling issues.

For over the past 30 years, Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County has been an integral part of the fabric of our community. I welcome them here. I'm delighted that the Minister of Community and Social Services has provided this opportunity.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I notice that up in the gallery we have Vivian McCaffrey and Cheryl Fullerton. Vivian is from ETFO and Cheryl is from OECTA.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This has been a good test for the Speaker, and we're certainly keeping Hansard very busy as well.

I'd like to welcome from Family Service Thames Valley, in the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, Warren Brooke and Sandra Savage, seated in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to both of you today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Labour. According to the Toronto Star, you've known for two weeks that Magdalene Gordo and Richelyn Tongson were forced to work up to 16 hours a day, five days a week, at approximately \$1.56 an hour—well below your \$10 minimum wage—at Liberal MP Ruby Dhalla's home.

While you have personally trumpeted two bills in this chamber that would protect nannies and temporary workers, it would appear you've been silent for two weeks after you were made aware of these reported abuses of your own Ontario legislation. What kind of minister sits by when workers are accusing his own friend of breaking the very labour laws he's brought forward? Minister, have you initiated an independent inquiry into these complaints?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. The member is quite right that we have been out consulting in communities, meeting with nannies and listening to their concerns—many groups: stakeholders, advocates, family, friends and supporters. We've heard many stories that have saddened me. In all of those round tables, those discussions that we have been having, what we have done is we have moved forward as a govern-

ment and we have set up a 1-800 hotline to receive calls. We have a dedicated team to address all of those concerns. At all of those meetings we've also distributed employment standards fact sheet information—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: When this minister was confronted with the complaint, he did nothing about it. On the one hand, this minister put forward legislation to protect nannies and temporary workers, while on the other hand he does nothing when his Liberal friend Ruby Dhalla is the target of a Toronto Star investigation which suggests she acted in contradiction of his own laws.

1040

It's been reported that you attended a meeting two weeks ago where these foreign workers cried out for help when they said Ruby Dhalla withheld their passports, yet not only did the federal Minister of Immigration say today in the Star—your own staff acknowledged that you did not pick up the phone and call the federal Minister of Immigration. Not only did you fail in your job as minister, you failed in your job as John Q. Public. I don't know how you couldn't pick up the phone and tell the proper federal authorities of this breach.

Will you step aside until there is an independent investigation into the Dhalla affair and your own mishandling of it?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is completely wrong. I have been meeting over many months, actually, with many of these caregivers. I did pick up the phone and I did call Minister Kenney. I explained to him many of the stories we were hearing from these caregivers; they were telling us about a completely broken, flawed program that they have federally. I encouraged Minister Kenney to take some leadership to fix that program because that's what we're doing here in this province.

We have set up a dedicated team to help with those who feel they've been discriminated against, who feel there has been a contravention of the employment standards. That team is there to assist any of those live-in caregivers, those nannies, with any claims they may have.

We have heard these—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As Ruby Dhalla's mentor and his federal leader once said, "You didn't get it done. You didn't get it done."

What kind of labour minister stands by and does nothing while it's reported that their friend abused the very labour laws he's responsible for? How can this Liberal government explain this failure to the Ontario public? You could have called the immigration minister; you chose not to. You could have told your own ministry officials; you chose not to. Minister, you don't get to pick and choose who abides by and who breaks your laws. They either do or they don't. You have no credibility on this file. You've failed as John Q. Citizen and you've failed as labour minister.

Now that this issue is a national—I repeat, national—embarrassment, will you step aside and ensure your

government calls an independent investigation into Ruby Dhalla?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: That member and her party have voted against every piece of legislation we have brought to this House to help vulnerable workers. Just the other day, that member and her party stood up against helping workers that are working for temporary—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: That member and her party voted against helping vulnerable workers who work in temporary help agencies. That is a shame, I say to that member.

I have picked up the phone. I have spoken to Minister Kenney. It is unfortunate that the federal government has not taken leadership on this very important matter. There is a completely broken live-in caregiver program in Canada that needs to be fixed. I would hope that Minister Kenney would take some leadership and fix that broken program. I've told Mr. Kenney—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That disgusting response just endorsed the need for this minister to step aside.

My question is to the Deputy Premier and it has to do with the Minister of Economic Development's now-infamous Canadian Club speech earlier this week when he talked about drawing from a \$2-billion fund of funds in order to pick winners and losers in the economy. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance was scrummed after question period and was asked about this \$2-billion fund of funds. He was standing there, I'm told, scratching his head and suggesting, "Well, we have a variety of funds."

Deputy Premier, if there is this much money, as your colleague in cabinet was suggesting at this Canadian Club meeting, why did you present a record-breaking deficit budget? Why did you secretly cut back on your promise to kids for textbooks and rural travel? Where is this \$2-billion fund of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Deputy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are, in fact, a variety of funds that this government uses to assist a variety of businesses, and that is the response I gave yesterday. I'll just review a number of them for you. There's the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. There is the northern heritage fund, which assists business. There is the RED fund, from the Ministry of Agriculture, to assist farms throughout the province.

So there are a variety of these funds. The total amount that's been allocated in their budgets is in the vicinity of \$2 billion.

Our government will continue to partner with business and labour to help grow this economy through the most challenging time in the world's economy since the 1930s.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This should really go back to the Deputy Premier.

The Minister of Economic Development clearly stated, in what today's National Post describes as a "bizarre" speech, that he plans to pick winners and losers and will be using \$2 billion of taxpayers' money as Liberal mad money in order to play the economy czar.

Yesterday I asked the Premier about this, and he didn't have, or at least declined to offer, a valid response. I think it's important to have clarity here. It sends a message to our business community and international investors.

Deputy Premier, was Minister Bryant's speech based on a government policy decision, or were you and your caucus blindsided by a minister with his own agenda?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government has been partnering with the business community over the course of the last five years. That's what the Next Generation of Jobs Fund is all about. It's what the advanced manufacturing investment strategy is all about. It's what the comprehensive tax reform package we brought forward in our budget is all about.

Governments around the world today are interfacing with business, are investing in business, are providing assistance to the auto sector—Japan, China, Germany, the United States, Canada, Sweden; a variety of countries.

We do, in fact, offer a variety of funds that are designed to assist with the preservation of jobs and to help create new jobs, particularly those new jobs that will be prevalent in the 21st century.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, there's not much clarity there.

We hear about a secret fund. Perhaps they also have a secret economic adviser, Hugo Chávez.

I want to quote Dalton McGuinty in 2001: "Why not stake out your ground honestly, in a forthright manner...?" That was Mr. McGuinty a few years ago. What we're hearing today is rhetoric, a clear attempt to keep information from the public. The Premier is once again doing exactly the opposite of what he preached when he was on this side of the House. He has become the poster boy for all the reasons people are cynical today about government.

In his speech, Minister Bryant said, "This is governments choosing winners and losers.... This is the business that we are in...."

So once again, back to the minister: When did your government get into that business? When did you decide that consumers and the marketplace in this province no longer have a say?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've offered a variety of programs—but I'd like to review the comments of some of the members of the Conservative Party in the last few weeks.

Some Conservatives like to call assistance to business corporate welfare, but here's what Frank Klees said in

December, when he asked the government to support a business in his riding—"for example, to the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which I have attempted to help some of my constituents make application to." He called upon us to help.

Christine Elliott, last year, said about the auto industry, "I wouldn't dismiss (another provincial investment) out of hand, especially where I come from.... I think it's important that" the auto industry "be given whatever support they can give."

Then their economic development critic, Ted Chudleigh, who often uses the term "corporate welfare," said last May, "I understand the need to partner with industry and to leverage investment, and I value GM as an important Ontario"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. This government claims its \$4.5-billion corporate tax giveaway is pro-jobs and pro-growth. New Democrats have argued that the \$4.5 billion could be far better used to fund strategic social and economic investments that will create the jobs of tomorrow, jobs like the ones at Bombardier in Thunder Bay, which will be killed if this province refuses to pay its fair share of the TTC's streetcar purchase.

My question is this: Why is this government insisting on giving away \$4.5 billion to corporations that are profitable in this province when that money should and could be better spent on creating and protecting jobs?

1050

Hon. George Smitherman: By way of supplementary, the finance minister might want to speak to this initiative, which has at its heart the desire to place our economy in a much more competitive circumstance on a going-forward basis. But I want to say to the honourable member who spoke, again, about the issue with respect to investment in public transit, that we welcome the New Democratic Party's return to support for public transit in the province of Ontario, and that the Bombardier workers in Thunder Bay are heralding the demise of the member from northwestern Ontario, who in the past said that he was against expansion of the subway line to York University and beyond.

We're going to work closely, as we have, to continue to make investments in public transit, along with the \$9 billion that the Premier has committed in the context of Metrolinx here in the greater Toronto area.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government's corporate tax giveaway to profitable companies made no sense when it was announced and it makes even less sense this morning. The Obama administration has made a bold move to discourage US subsidiaries in foreign countries from investing there simply on the basis of low local corporate tax rates. Since the corporate tax giveaway now

threatens to cost Ontario revenue and jobs, when will this government do the responsible thing, reverse its course and call it off?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can assure the member opposite we won't back off a policy that's going to rebuild the Ontario economy. And you know what? She ought to get her facts straight about what's going on. Like typical New Democrats, she doesn't have her facts straight. In fact, the Obama administration has provided corporate tax cuts.

We are simply moving in a balanced and prudent fashion across personal income tax—the member forgets \$10.6 billion in personal tax cuts. Is she opposed to that? Is she opposed to giving our corporations a more competitive position to go forward on? Is she opposed to that? Is she still opposed to the child benefit which she has voted against repeatedly? Is she opposed to that? Is she opposed to the 25 in 5 Network, who supported this budget?

This government has a plan. That party's hopelessly lost in the past—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I hope that the finance minister is aware of his plan to bring corporate taxes down to 25% when the US administration has it at 35%. How about that for a fact? Other jurisdictions are worried, Finance Minister; other jurisdictions are very worried. Governments in places like India and Ireland realize exactly what's at stake and that jobs are definitely on the line. The Obama administration is forcing them to reconsider their approach right now. That's what's happening. They are paying attention to what's happening in the US; why won't this government do the same? Call off the \$4.5-billion corporate tax giveaway and use the money to invest in jobs like those at Bombardier in Thunder Bay.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, I'm glad the member opposite finally gets it. In fact, the US corporate tax rate is 38%, and ours will be 25%, because we will be more competitive than Michigan, more competitive than Ohio, more competitive than Indiana, more competitive than Kentucky, more competitive than California.

The member opposite doesn't understand the breadth of the US tax code which provides a range of exemptions that encourage US firms to locate offshore. She can talk about the US all she wants. I'm going to talk about working families in Ontario. I'm going to talk about getting working people back to work. I'm going to talk about building the biggest and best economy we can have in the 21st century in Ontario. We'll beat them at their own game, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the finance minister refuses to acknowledge is that the 10% giveaway is going

to end up in the US Treasury; that's where it's going to end up.

My question now is to the Acting Premier. Dozens and dozens of women across Ontario are getting pink slips for having children, with employers using the poor economy as an excuse. What does this Acting Premier think of this discriminatory and deplorable practice?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I also would like to thank the member—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to hear the answer, and I think that all the honourable members of the opposition would appreciate hearing it as well.
Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I thank the member for the support on the temporary help agencies legislation, unlike the Conservative Party, which would not support that.

I can say, as a husband and the father of two young children, that I know how important it was for my family and for my wife to know that she had peace of mind when she was at home taking care of our new babies. She had the support of a very good employer. As Ontarians start new families, they should not have to worry about unscrupulous employers.

Let's be clear: It is illegal for employers to discriminate against pregnant women in Ontario, and any employer who discriminates against a pregnant woman or a parent who is entitled to leave will be prosecuted. The employment standards have severe—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Vera Trevisanello, who is here in the gallery, is a new mom. Vera was expecting to return to her financial services job after her son was born, but just days before she was expecting to return to work, she was terminated.

Across Ontario, numerous women are telling the same story, and New Democrats are calling on your government—on this government—to hire more employment standards officers, to increase the number of annual workplace inspections and to educate employers—educate them—on the Employment Standards Act and human rights legislation. If this government is serious about stamping out this discriminatory practice, will it support what New Democrats are calling for?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I am very sorry to hear about anybody who has been discriminated against by an unscrupulous employer, and that's why we actually put \$4.5 million more in this last budget to hire more employment standards officers. They are very well trained individuals.

Again, getting back to our employment standards, let's be clear: Anybody—any employer—who breaks the law and discriminates against a pregnant woman or someone who is on parental leave will be severely penalized through fines and even imprisonment.

I say to the member that we have strong laws here in Ontario. Anybody who feels they are in this situation, please contact the Ministry of Labour—our employment standards officers. This is top priority and it moves right to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Once again, this government talks the sympathetic talk but comes up short in enforcing its own legislation, and it's women who are paying the price in this province. If this government is serious about protecting women's rights and upholding Ontario's laws, why is it allowing women to be punished for having children?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, we want to ensure that all women—anybody who is on parental leave—are protected, and that is why we have very strong laws in Ontario. We have employment standards officers who are professionals and are very well trained.

I encourage anybody who feels they have been discriminated against to contact the Ministry of Labour employment standards officers. They will investigate, and if an employer is found to be treating an employee illegally, they will be severely penalized through fines and, as I said, even imprisonment.

We want to ensure that the employees, the hard-working Ontarians, are protected by our laws, and that's what we're doing. That's why we put \$4.5 million more into hiring more officers to get out there and investigate, and we prioritized this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1100

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a question for the Deputy Premier. The government's new reverse Reaganism strategy has economists up in arms. Doug Porter, the new chief economist for the Bank of Montreal Capital Markets, said it "flies in the face of decades of evidence," the CD Howe Institute calls it "very dangerous" and many more voices warn of pork-barrel politics, unpaid loans and more economic mismanagement from the McGuinty government. Even the Premier acknowledged earlier this year that governments are a brake on growth. He was referring to red tape at the time, I believe.

Deputy Premier, is your new reverse Reaganism strategy based on a certain model, a particular study, a historical example? Is there a shining city on the hill where this system has actually worked, outside of Cuba or North Korea?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member just asked a question. I would like him to listen to the response.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, a number of those economists have endorsed the government's budgetary policy, its fiscal policy. I can point to Jack Mintz, I can point to the CD Howe Institute, I can point to senior economists with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

This government does have a variety of programs that are designed to create and attract new jobs to Ontario. In fact, we have a Toyota plant just outside of Woodstock that benefited from that. We have a variety of new industries related to renewable energy that are starting to build here in Ontario because of various programs that this government's offered.

These are difficult and challenging times. We will continue to put forward a budgetary and economic policy that will see us through perhaps the worst downturn in the economy since the Great Depression and make this economy bigger, better—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: So these partisan, untrained media darlings on the government side are going to go out and pick the winners and losers in Ontario. For the lucky winners, or friends of the Liberal Party, this is great news. But for the losers, those companies who don't meet the hidden criteria, this is a disaster. Instead of competing on a level playing field, non-subsidized companies will only be up against the subsidized winners, but they'll also be paying them with their own tax dollars.

Why would any small- or medium-sized business, or loser, as you would call them, want to invest in a land where they are forced to subsidize their competitors?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I wonder if the member is aware of a company called Roxul Inc. in his riding, which received a \$10-million loan to create or retain 232 jobs. Are you asking that that not be done? Mr. Barrett from Norfolk county: I wonder if he opposed the \$7.15-million advanced manufacturing loan to Toyotetsu, which will create or retain 250 jobs. I wonder if Mr. Hardeman from Woodstock is opposed to the \$8.7-million—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, thumbs up; he supported it—an \$8.7-million advanced manufacturing investment strategy loan to create 365 skilled jobs.

These members opposite have supported these particular applications into their ridings. This government is pursuing a balanced policy that will see Ontario through the most difficult challenge in the economy since the 1930s and our economy will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. He refused to answer this question earlier. Let's try again.

At a recent public meeting hosted by the Minister of Labour, two women spoke of employment standards violations they experienced while employed by Liberal member of Parliament Ruby Dhalla. The question is, will

the Minister of Labour, in his own words, "severely penalize" Ruby Dhalla or put her in jail?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. Again, what I have done, the Ministry of Labour has done and our government has done is reached out to many communities, to individuals that are working through a federal live-in caregiver program that we know is severely broken. We've heard their stories, and those stories are very concerning.

In those meetings, when we hear those stories, here's what we've shared with them: First off, we've established a 1-800 number with a support team to be able to take any claims that those live-in caregivers may have. We've also distributed employment standards information at all those meetings, so everybody attending those meetings receives information and the number to call, because we want to ensure that professionals that we have within the ministry are able to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful.

The member from Parkdale-High Park, supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A 1-800 number is not an answer to the question. Magdalene Gordo and Richelyn Tongson said that they were required to work 12 to 15 hours a day for sub-minimum wage. They weren't paid properly and had their passports held by Dr. Dhalla. Yet you chose to do nothing, Mr. Minister of Labour, about these allegations.

In your own words, you've just said to this House that you would penalize a perpetrator and that you would see them put in jail. The question is: Will you stand up for the Liberal Party or will you stand up for workers in Ontario? Will you penalize Ruby Dhalla? Will you put Ruby Dhalla in jail?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member that within the Ministry of Labour we have dedicated, committed, professional, well-trained inspectors and officers. That's the message that I've always delivered at any meeting that I've gone to. We've—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps we could have a question period and let everybody just heckle back and forth. It could be very entertaining.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm just going to keep letting the clock run. It's not harming me.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Having listened to many of the stories that the live-in caregivers, the nannies, have shared with me, I picked up the phone many weeks ago and I spoke to Minister Kenney—this is a federal live-in caregiver program. I explained to him the shortcomings of this program, the challenges within this program, and how they need to be fixed. Unfortunately, Minister Kenney has not moved forward to fix this program. So what we've done here at the Ministry of Labour, in the government of Ontario, is to put in a dedicated team to help

with anybody that feels that they've been discriminated against. We have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TEACHERS

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: My question is to the Minister of Education, in regard to the Premier's award ceremony for teaching excellence that was held yesterday. These provincial awards were given to 20 educators and support staff for their excellent contribution to student learning and achievement.

I am proud to inform the House and congratulate one of my constituents for receiving an award for excellence in leadership. Chantal Bertrand is a teacher and a coordinator who is committed to helping everyone learn, from age 16 to 60. Throughout her career, she has worked to build community partnerships and collaboration on the introduction of courses that meet the students' needs, such as welding for women and computing for adults 55 and over.

Would the minister explain what else is being done to motivate and support our educators, as it has a direct effect on the success of our students?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to congratulate all of the recipients of the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence, and I want to thank my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for attending the ceremony and staying and celebrating with all of those award recipients.

Support and respect are hallmarks of our relationship with educators in this province. We have worked very hard to make sure that the relationship is a good one. We've done things specifically in relation to teachers, like creating a new teacher induction program, providing new teachers with mentoring in those early years. We've made changes to the Ontario College of Teachers that have allowed more classroom teachers to sit on its council. We've also increased funding in the system by over \$5 billion since 2003, which means we've increased the number of teachers by 10,500, despite the fact of declining enrolment.

So the awards ceremony last night celebrated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Minister, I know that in addition to teachers, support workers also play a valuable role in furthering the achievement of our students.

Last night, I heard about the wonderful achievements of Laureen Kuzyk, an educational assistant from Rainy River who is generous in helping students in need. She brings in used clothes and provides free haircuts to students having financial difficulties. She also provides tutoring for students who are struggling academically. She does this, and more, in a way that preserves their dignity and privacy.

We know that teachers aren't the only ones who are playing a part in creating a welcoming and supportive

environment for students. Could the minister tell us what our government is doing in regard to support and funding for our valuable education support staff?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We believe that support workers are an integral part of student success in this province. As the Premier said last night, everyone who works in our schools, all of the adults who work in our schools, are teachers. They touch and form the lives of our students.

Last night, we heard about support workers who coach. We heard about support workers who mentor students. They go way beyond the parameters of their job description to work with kids in the schools. The kids know them and relate to them. It was a great pleasure to be able to celebrate those support workers last night.

What we've done as a government is work with support-worker unions. This past year, we've managed to have provincial agreements with all of our support-worker unions, leading to four-year agreements for those individual units. We have increased support staff by 8,600, also in the face of declining enrolment. The celebration last night—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question again is to the Minister of Labour, since I'm still not getting any answers. The minister has admitted that he got this information about Ruby Dhalla's nannies two weeks ago. He admitted as much to the House. Did he report it to ministry officials? These are Ontario's labour laws. What did the minister do about this egregious break of them?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Once again, I don't think the member heard the first time. The main thing we are doing is getting out and meeting with all the live-in caregivers and nannies. When we meet in these town halls, in these round tables, in these discussion groups, we hear many stories. Many of them are alarming. That is why at all these meetings we provide employment standards information. We provide information so that they can contact our officers. If there is a claim to be made—we have a dedicated team that is there to support them—they would call, make that claim and that dedicated team would be able to go in and investigate that claim.

These are professional, well-trained individuals. That is the right way to do things. Unfortunately, the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Minister of Labour: You are the minister. The responsibility stops with you. You heard the allegations; you did nothing, in your own words. The question is, will you penalize Ruby Dhalla? Will you put Ruby Dhalla in jail, according to your own standards, Mr. Minister—your own standards?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member can puff and holler all she wants over there, but this government is on the side of Ontario workers—all workers. We are here to

protect those live-in caregivers, and that is why we are reaching out to the community. That's why we're listening. We do hear some alarming stories. Most of those stories, I could tell you, stem back to a flawed, broken federal live-in caregiver program. That's why, as soon as I started hearing the stories, I picked up the phone, I called Minister Kenney, and I said, "Take some national leadership on this; fix your program." That has not been done, so we have moved forward with a toll-free 1-800 number, with town hall meetings and with employment standards sheets distributed across the province in all our libraries, early years centres, through our schools, through advocacy groups, stakeholders—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, as you know, this week is Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, and today we are joined at Queen's Park by members of Family Service Ontario. As you know, FSO assists tens of thousands of individuals and families in communities across Ontario each year. They assist Ontarians with emotional, psychological, social, physical and financial struggles. I have seen the good work done by FSO first-hand when I worked with them to develop the government's domestic violence action plan. Their presence in 27 communities across Ontario has made a significant difference around our province. In my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the FSO is headed by its executive director, John Ellis, and it plays an invaluable role by supporting families in need.

Minister, can you please tell members of this House how our government is working to support the important work being undertaken each and every day across our province by Family Service Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for all the support that she gave through this review with regard to violence against women. I'd like to welcome to this House Family Service Ontario, who are with us today in the Legislature.

Family service agencies assist Ontarians of every age group and socio-economic level. In my ministry alone, family service agencies have benefited from a number of increases to violence-against-women programs provided by MCSS, including a \$1-million enhancement to transitional and housing support programs and a \$2.5-million enhancement to counselling programs. In the developmental services sector, 13 FSO agencies received a total of \$7.7 million in 2008, and I want to thank family services agencies for their tremendous work and dedication to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Minister, as I mentioned, FSO agencies cover a large spectrum of services, and I'd like to ask you specifically about mental health services and what our government is doing in this regard. Some of

Ontario's most vulnerable citizens quietly suffer from various mental health challenges. In my work at the Gatehouse, I saw first-hand the effects that childhood abuse can have on one's mental health, and just yesterday I met with representatives from Etobicoke Children's Centre to discuss the challenges faced by this important sector.

Minister, many of the affected Ontarians fall under your watch. They may be ODSP and OW recipients or women fleeing domestic abuse. What action is our government taking to tackle the critical and often hidden issue of mental health?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Since 2004, this government has increased funding by more than \$200 million to improve mental health services to build capacity outside the provisional institutional services setting. We have increased funding, to more than \$270 million, to over 300 community mental health agencies in Ontario. This increased funding has expanded access to over 200,000 more Ontarians seeking mental health services and hired more than 1,100 new mental health workers. The government has also established an advisory group on mental health and addiction to provide direction on the development of a 10-year comprehensive strategy for mental health and addiction. So yes, our government acknowledges that there is work to be done on the issue of mental health, and we will continue to support the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Labour as well. This is a very serious issue related to the possibility of Liberal favouritism with respect to the application of Ontario laws. Hopefully, he will try to respond to the specifics.

We have been advised, through the media, that he and his colleague, the Minister of Education, were advised at a public meeting by two individuals of serious violations of Ontario's employment standards laws by a Liberal member of federal Parliament. I ask him specifically: Did he not believe that he had an ethical responsibility, with respect to this concern being expressed by these two individuals, to act, and act at that moment?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member we have heard many stories, hundreds of stories, at all of these town halls and roundtable meetings that we've had. The vast majority of all the complaints and challenges that come from these stories are federally related.

Many of the complaints we've heard about—here's what Minister Kenney had to say in terms of where they do fall under his responsibility: "If someone was working in a home who was here without a work permit appropriate for that job, that would be my ministry"—his ministry—"and so that should be reported to the officials of Immigration Canada. If someone was paid under the table without taxes paid, that should be reported to

Revenue Canada. And if workers did not have their basic labour code rights respected, if they were forced to work 12 hours a day or something, then that should be reported to the provincial Ministry of Labour”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This isn't a federal problem; it's a Liberal problem.

Not too many years ago, your colleagues asked for the head of the Solicitor General when potentially a young offender was identified in this House—a federal law. They asked for the head of the minister and they got it.

Interjection: Who was it?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You're talking to him. That's right.

Here we have an allegation of a violation of provincial laws. The minister is present. It involves a Liberal member of Parliament, and you sat on your fanny and have done nothing about it? You have to resign, step down, and let's have an independent investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: For all of this member's bluster, if you look at his record here in this House, he has voted against vulnerable workers time and time again, unlike this government that is putting protections in place to address vulnerable workers in the province of Ontario.

If all individuals, all groups, all stakeholders that I speak with—I always say, if there is an employment standards issue, if they would like to make a complaint, if they would like to make a claim, we have provided that information. But, as we can see from Minister Kenney's remarks and quote, that most of this falls to the federal government, as when it comes to Immigration Canada or Revenue Canada. So I ask that member to pick up the phone, call your member in Ottawa and ask him to show a little bit—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Parkdale–High Park.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The question, again, is to the Minister of Labour. Over two weeks ago, you received detailed information and allegations, Mr. Minister—they were not stories—regarding serious breaches of Ontario labour law. As Minister of Labour, what did you do with that information? Did you report it to ministry and labour officials and did you ask them to investigate or not?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is quite right when she says “allegations.” I'm not going to comment on any particular case, but I can let the member know what I did do. At that roundtable, as we heard many stories, what we did is we provided information to every single person in that room. We encouraged them to call the Ministry of Labour. Nobody is above the law, I say to the member over there, and she should know full well, when it comes to the Ministry of Labour. The employment standards office would take in a complaint or a claim and be able to address it with highly trained professionals who will be

able to investigate. I would think that would be what the member would want: to have a transparent system where we have public servants who are highly trained—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Minister of Labour: This is your responsibility. This is your ministry. These are Ontario labour laws that are being breached.

Again, I ask the Minister of Labour, what did he do? He had this information two weeks ago. Did he ask his officials to investigate this most egregious breach of Ontario labour law or not? Yes or no?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member that the ministry investigates independently of politics. The member may not like that, but we have a great employment standards office in Ontario that is doing commendable work. Those officers are out there every single day addressing claims.

What we've set up, because this is such an important issue and we've been hearing these alarming stories, is a dedicated team behind that 1-800 number. The 1-800 toll-free hotline has been in place for one week. We've received 120 calls, and three claims have been made through that 1-800 number. We are going to continue to work with the community to hear these complaints and do everything we can provincially to fix a flawed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

POVERTY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This morning, Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act, was debated at third reading, and it will go to a final vote just after question period. Prior to today's debate, the social policy committee received over 20 in-person presentations and also a number of written submissions. The opposition parties also put forward suggestions to strengthen the bill. In the end, the bill was significantly amended, including five amendments put forward by the NDP.

Can the minister please explain the changes made to strengthen the bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to start by thanking the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

Right from the beginning of the development of the poverty reduction strategy, we knew that we needed the participation of a wide range of Ontarians in order to develop the strongest possible strategy and the strongest possible legislation. That's why we consulted widely and welcomed people into the conversation who had never before felt heard.

That “all hands on deck” approach continued throughout the legislative process. I was very pleased to see the number and the quality of presentations to the standing committee. Many of the people who made presentations are with us today, and I welcome them. They are here to witness the historic vote that will follow question period.

We received some great suggestions for strengthening the bill, and we moved on a large number of them. We

expanded the principles that future strategies must be guided by, by recognizing that women are at higher risk of poverty and more explicitly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jacek: It's good to hear how open this process was and of the government's willingness to make changes to strengthen the bill. This legislation, if passed, would enshrine in law an ongoing commitment on the part of the Ontario government to poverty reduction. It would require current and future governments to issue annual reports on the progress of the strategy, hold consultations regularly and issue a new strategy and target at least every five years.

Can the minister please expand on what this legislation really does to reduce poverty in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The passage of this legislation marks the beginning of a new era in Ontario. Going forward, all governments of Ontario, regardless of their political stripe, will be required to consider poverty reduction to be a core responsibility. Just like health care and education, poverty reduction will be part of every government's mandate. They will be required to listen to people living in poverty and those who advocate for them. They will be required to measure their progress and set a target, and they will be required to report to the Legislature annually on how they are doing. The days of poverty reduction being an extra or, worse yet, ignored altogether will be behind us.

We wouldn't be here without the very, very hard work of many people, people who have joined in common cause to work toward a shared goal. To all of those who have played a part in getting to this day, I say thank you. You have made a lasting difference to the health and prosperity of the people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1130

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: About seven minutes ago, I received an e-mail from the Minister of Immigration's office.

Interjection: Who are you talking to?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Labour. About seven minutes ago, I received an e-mail from the Minister of Immigration. He said, "For the record, in case there is any confusion, Minister Fonseca has never raised the issue of Magdalene Gordo and Richelyn Tongson with Minister Kenney. Nor has he or his staff raised it with Immigration ... officials. Fonseca spoke to Kenney a month ago to talk about the program generally; they haven't spoken since and he's never discussed the case with us or our officials."

Would the minister like to correct the record? How can this province trust this minister when he tells one thing to the chamber and does another thing when he is outside of it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'm glad that the member called the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. Kenney, because I picked up the phone many weeks ago, if not over a month ago, and spoke to Minister Kenney about all the issues that we were hearing in all our round tables.

It would be inappropriate of me—and the member should know this, or ought to know this—to speak about a particular case, but what I can say to the member is in that round table meeting, I acted immediately. I gave information to those caregivers immediately. They got information to be able to call our impartial, independent investigators so that they can get to work on the case. That's how things are done here in a democracy. The member may not like that, but that is the right way to do things.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister has lied to this chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, out of respect for you, I will withdraw.

The minister may want to clarify his comments so that he is not misleading this chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw out of respect for you, but perhaps his comments have been misinterpreted by this side of the House.

He has often said to us to call our friends in the federal government. He has told this chamber to call a 1-800 number. The fact remains that this minister, the Minister of Education and a whole lot of people over in the Mississauga-Brampton area got together and they were told something that was reported in the Toronto Star that they did nothing about.

I will ask again for the minister to step aside, call an independent inquiry into what Ruby Dhalla has done and to start upholding his own legislation that he brings into this chamber.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I picked up the phone. I called Minister Kenney over a month ago. I explained to him all the issues that we were hearing in our round tables. Many of them, the vast majority of them, dealt with a flawed, broken live-in caregiver federal program. But when we have gone out and consulted with live-in caregivers, we've acted immediately. We've provided information so that individuals who feel that they have a claim can have an independent investigator go in and do their job—they are highly trained professionals—and help the claimant with that case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The member from Parkdale-High Park.

Mr. Michael Prue: Ruby just resigned.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, we just got news that Ruby Dhalla has resigned her critic portfolio.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The question is to the Minister of Labour. These are serious allegations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The clock is stopped this time because I'm hearing it from the government side.

Member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A question for the Minister of Labour: Your duty is to look after the labour rights of workers in the province of Ontario. Two weeks ago, you heard from women some allegations of phenomenal abuse. They were working 12 to 15 hours a day at less than minimum wage. Their passports were being held illegally. The question is, Mr. Minister, did you order your officials to investigate these serious allegations or not?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We treat these cases very seriously, so what we did is, right away, immediately, we provided access to all of those who felt that they may have an employment standards claim. We encouraged them: "Call the number. We have a dedicated team of officers and investigators—independent officers and investigators." We want to ensure that those workers are protected, so that is why, over the last week with this 1-800 number—an outreach to the community—we've received 120 calls, and three claims have been made.

We are continuing to move forward with legislation and to bring legislation here to this chamber because of a federal program that is severely broken. I would hope that Minister Kenney would take some national leadership and fix—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Minister of Labour: These women didn't need a 1-800 number; they had you and your entourage to immediately complain to. You didn't listen; you didn't report it; you didn't do anything about their allegations of abuse.

Clearly, the question is: Did you or did you not? We hear in the silence in the House that you did not. Are you going to admit to the House, Mr. Minister of Labour, that you did nothing to help these women in their allegations of abuse because Ruby Dhalla is a member of your own party?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: No matter which politician or individual is involved, I do not direct the investigators or officers. What I do, as Minister of Labour, is provide access, and we did that right away. We acted immediately. We provided that information so that that individual could call for more information and make a claim. We have a dedicated team there to help anybody who would like to make a claim. This is an impartial team. These are professionally trained public servants.

DEFERRED VOTES

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DE LA PAUVRETÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 152, An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario / Projet de loi 152, Loi concernant une stratégie à long terme de réduction de la pauvreté en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Matthews has moved third reading of Bill 152. All those in favour will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fonseca, Peter	Milloy, John
Arthurs, Wayne	Gélinas, France	Mitchell, Carol
Bailey, Robert	Gerretsen, John	Munro, Julia
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Emie	O'Toole, John
Bentley, Christopher	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Savoline, Joyce
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Chudleigh, Ted	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craiton, Kim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 78; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Guelph and page Cameron Hoey, I'd like to welcome his father, Steve Hoey, to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CATHOLIC FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Today, I would like to warmly welcome members of the Catholic Family Counselling Centre of Waterloo region to Queen's Park.

This organization, with its dedicated staff and volunteers, provides support for more than 25,000 people in our region each year by providing counselling services and programs such as Pathways to Education, employee assistance plans, Families and Schools Together and the family violence project.

This organization is dedicated to improving the lives of all people who come through their doors, and has been doing so for over 50 years.

The Catholic Family Counselling Centre exists so that people can find the strength, the skills and the confidence to deal with life's challenges and opportunities.

What makes this organization so successful is their ability to foster partnerships with community organizations, businesses and all levels of government.

This organization focuses on the why, never the why not. They continue to move forward, even during these challenging economic times, when organizations like this take on an even greater importance for community members.

This organization is led by Cathy Brothers. I can tell you that they have a dedicated, hard-working team of employees and volunteers who ensure that people receive the supports they need.

Again, welcome to all from Catholic Family Counselling Centre.

FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRE OF BRANT

Mr. Dave Levac: In good times and bad, up and down, and thick and thin, Ontario's success rests on the strength of its families. From time to time, every family needs the support of its neighbours and friends and, indeed, its community.

That is why the Family Counselling Centre of Brant is so central to the lives of the citizens of Brantford and Brant county and to all the family counselling centres in the province of Ontario.

For over 90 years, the Family Counselling Centre of Brant has made helping families, for a variety of reasons, its mission. That's because the Family Counselling Centre of Brant knows that strong families support a strong Ontario, and that Ontario is indeed stronger because of its great families. Partnerships are a key component of the Family Counselling Centre of Brant's mission, which partners with agencies across the board.

Please join me in recognizing the representative from the Family Counselling Centre of Brant, the executive director, Shelley McCarthy, who stands as an example of someone who is dedicated to ensuring that families in my riding receive compassionate, understanding and pro-

fessional counselling year after year for many reasons—again, across the board.

Community mental health agencies like the FCCB saw an increase in funding to assist them with front-line delivery.

I would also like to remind members of this House, on behalf of the board of the Family Counselling Centre of Brant, Inc., the families they serve in Brantford and Brant county and all the agencies that we know are here today, that we invite you to participate in family services day. Please join these great people and these great agencies in attending the Family Service Ontario reception at Queen's Park at 4 o'clock in the dining room. We're glad they're here.

MAGGIE McCREATH

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise today to pay tribute to my constituent Maggie McCreath. She received the 2009 June Callwood award of achievement. This award recognizes exceptional leadership, innovation and creativity in the volunteer sector.

The award is named in honour of the late Canadian journalist, author and social activist June Callwood, who founded more than 50 Canadian social action organizations. Each of the 20 individuals or organizations selected this year has made an outstanding contribution to their community and to Ontario.

Maggie McCreath, who is from Uxbridge, has been active in 25 volunteer groups, including Relay for Life, Roxy Kids in Action, Diabetes Drive, Hospice and Meals on Wheels. She is also a member of the Uxbridge accessibility advisory committee. Maggie continues to be a driving force behind organizations such as Operation Warm Hearts, which collects 500 gently used boots and winter coats for those in need each year.

Congratulations to Maggie McCreath, an outstanding citizen, an outstanding volunteer, my constituent and a recipient of the 2009 June Callwood Award.

I would like to respect Minister Chan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, for coming to my riding of Durham and presenting this award.

COMMUNITY ACCESS TO CHILD HEALTH

Mr. Paul Miller: Last constituency week I visited a number of organizations in my riding of Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, including Community Access to Child Health, or CATCH. When my staff and I walked into CATCH, we were greeted by the sights and sounds of children and parents laughing and playing. They were there for the parent and child interactive play group, just one example of CATCH's many excellent programs. Other services include a youth centre, a euchre club for seniors, a food bank and an after-school academic support program.

Unfortunately, there is only enough funding to operate the afterschool program for another four months. Funding should be provided for the whole school year, because the youth using this program have a more positive

and brighter future as a result of these initiatives. Visiting CATCH brings home just how important programs like it are to the whole community.

It was especially impressive to see how involved parents, community members and volunteers are in CATCH. On our tour we saw volunteers making a healthy lunch for the parent and child interactive group. This lunch program was started by parents who saw a need for it, applied for funding and continue to operate it. CATCH's program project coordinator, Judy Kloosterman, explained that community members are active in organizing and running CATCH programs.

I proudly sponsor two T-ball teams on which many CATCH youth play.

Visiting CATCH and witnessing the dedication and hard work of staff and volunteers was an inspiring experience for my staff and me. I would like to thank all those who help to keep this valuable community group going. Thank you.

AMATEUR SINGING CONTEST

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Last month, I and 400 guests had the great pleasure to attend the international Amateur Singing Contest by John Santos. It was a truly Canadian, multicultural event. What I saw and experienced touched me deeply.

The evening's program was designed to showcase the real talent of each performer. Mr. Santos, an accomplished music director, and his wife, Lisa, set the stage for a most supportive backdrop. John's music lifted the spirit of the performers to such heights which enabled all of them to soar, to give their best and to give of themselves. The audience too was thus transformed into a supportive and appreciative cast. The rhythmic music—sometimes soft, sometimes powerful, sometimes light—the colourful light and the uplifting, warm, melodious voices produced such a marvellous sound that time was forgotten and people didn't even want to go home. Some shouted, "More, more."

It was truly a night to remember. These finest are Canadians' pride and joy. They deserve to be recognized for their enormous talent, and I would be delighted to provide some opportunity so that they could launch their career and bring joy to lives, even to a wider audience here in Ontario.

I'm happy to introduce them to you and to the people of Ontario: the first-place winner in the junior finalists, Kayla de Brito; second place, Jordan Pereira; and Claudia Pereira, Melissa da Costa and Emily Ferreira. The adult finalists: George Rengifo, first place; Monica Cidade, second place; Sara Marques, Stephany Pascoal and Ramiro Lopez Sança. Thank you very much, and congratulations to all of them.

1510

SMOKING BAN

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to remind the Liberal government that the clock is ticking

for Gator Ted. It was just over a year ago that my private member's bill was squashed by your government. Bill 42 was designed to close a loophole in your own anti-smoking legislation and set Ted Kindos free from your contradictory policies. Unfortunately, that bill didn't survive past committee.

Hope reared its head over a month ago when Minister McMeekin stood in his place and proudly stated: "This government is determined to make sure that we find a way to support Ted Kindos and small business people like Ted Kindos." The minister went on to say, "I do want to provide this House with assurance that being caught between a regulatory rock and a hard place is something that this government won't stand for, and we'll make sure that this is sorted out." As the King said, a little less conversation and a little more action, please. That would be good here, Minister.

The government has put our small business people on life support, between your economic meddling and your HST disaster. You need to get to the bottom of this now, as you promised to do. You need to take a stand and decide which one of your policies Ted Kindos is obligated to follow, and instruct your ministry to back off.

Someone is milking the system here, and it isn't the hard-working small business people. They're trapped in a nightmare. If I were you, Minister, I would take the King's words to heart.

LISGAR GO STATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I rise today to share with my colleagues a new green energy addition to our new GO train station in the great community of Lisgar.

Last month, on Earth Day, I joined the Minister of Transportation and Mississauga Ward 9 councillor, Pat Saito, as we inaugurated the Lisgar GO station wind turbine's entry into service.

Lisgar station was selected for GO Transit's first-ever wind turbine because of wind patterns and speeds in that north Mississauga area. The turbine can produce about 50 kilowatts of power in moderate winds of 11.3 metres per second, and is estimated to generate about 80% of Lisgar GO station's electrical power.

Also on display at Lisgar were two of GO Transit's environmentally friendly transportation options: a 78-seat double-decker bus and a 45-seat hybrid bus. Both were equipped with a bike rack.

On average, 100 cars in GTA traffic carry only 115 people. One 12-car GO train can carry nearly as many people as 1,600 cars. This reduces both traffic congestion and air pollution as well.

Lisgar is not only Ontario's newest GO train station, but it's also Ontario's greenest as well.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bill Mauro: It appears that both of the opposition parties have found religion when it comes to mass transit in Ontario. Just yesterday, we heard a Conservative member tell the Legislature that he had discovered the

importance to Thunder Bay of the recently announced city of Toronto contract that went to Bombardier. This apparent epiphany is a bit difficult to listen to. That member and that government while in office publicly announced that they were no longer in the public transit business. Predictably, for eight or nine years, nothing happened through the TTC.

Then there's the NDP, those wonderful front-runners, who, when they see an issue that has legs and might be successful, like to appear to be on the front end. But only a little over a year ago, this issue was so unimportant to the NDP that they did not even include mention of it in their election platform materials.

The report card on this is very clear: a Liberal platform in 2003 that committed to get back into public transit, a policy that has led directly to two major contracts landing in Thunder Bay—one for \$700 million, with 200 million provincial dollars, creating 300 new jobs for five years, and just one month ago, a \$56-million contract, with 100% provincial money, for 20 new GO Transit buses.

I've been working on, and will continue to work on, the recently announced \$1.2-billion contract—which has the possibility to grow to \$3 billion—that can create several hundred new jobs at Bombardier.

Our Liberal government, through Dalton McGuinty, has been supporting mass transit in Thunder Bay and creating jobs there since 2003. We welcome the recently converted—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'm rising today to have a few words about my good friends at Certified General Accountants of Ontario. I'm not sure that you know, and maybe it doesn't matter to many of you, but I'm proud to be a life member of the CGA in Ontario, and to help them remind you of what service they provide in this province. They are, of course, involved in corporations, in education, in government as well, and certainly provide a great service in public practice and with non-profit organizations in the province.

But that's not the whole reason that I'm standing here today to speak to my colleagues in the Legislature. Each of you would have received an invitation from Certified General Accountants of Ontario to attend a reception starting at 5:30 today in rooms 228 and 230. I do hope that each of you will take the opportunity to stop in, say hello to my colleagues and enjoy their company for a little while.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His

Honour has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario / Loi concernant une stratégie à long terme de réduction de la pauvreté en Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 19 and Mr. Hampton assumes ballot item number 28, and Mr. Arnott assumes ballot item number 16 and Mr. Shurman assumes ballot item number 73.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 171

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to draw to the members' attention that a co-sponsored bill appears on the Orders and Notices paper that contravenes standing order 52, which states, "No motion, or amendment, the subject matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session."

Bill 171, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities, standing in the name of Mr. Shurman, Mr. Kormos and Mr. Sergio, is substantially the same as Bill 78, which was lost on second reading earlier in the session.

Therefore, as was the case yesterday with respect to Mr. Yakubuski's Bill 174, I find Bill 171 to be out of order and have directed that it be removed from the order paper.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: I beg leave to present a Report on Agencies, Boards and Commissions: Ontario Infrastructure Projects Corp. (Infrastructure Ontario) from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mrs. Julia Munro: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, it is a pleasure to table

the report of the committee. The committee undertakes reviews from time to time of the operation of selected agencies, boards and commissions of the province.

This report of the committee reviews and commends the work of Infrastructure Ontario and makes recommendations on how they may improve some of their approaches and procedures. Topical areas covered include enhanced public disclosure; infrastructure and economic development; innovative building design and infrastructure projects; and the management of the Darlington nuclear procurement project.

Our committee wishes to express its appreciation to the senior staff of Infrastructure Ontario and all witnesses who appeared before us during the public hearings on this agency.

I would like to thank committee members for their contributions to the review process, as well as legislative staff: Douglas Arnott, the clerk of the committee, and Jerry Richmond, the research officer.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 52, private members' notice of motion number 89, standing in the name of Mr. Yakabuski, may be called as ballot item number 14 on Thursday, May 7, 2009.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1520

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Burlington do not want" the McGuinty 13% "sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the" McGuinty "13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the" McGuinty "13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I support the intent of this petition and I give it to page Grace.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Dave Levac: This is called "Make it seven: Support the move of the Phoenix Coyotes to southern Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Jim Balsillie of Research in Motion has put in an offer to purchase the Phoenix Coyotes and move them to a location in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas there are a number of outstanding communities that could host this NHL franchise, like Kitchener, Waterloo, Hamilton, Mississauga, the city of Vaughan, Peterborough, Brampton, Brantford and Oakville; and

"Whereas an NHL franchise in southern Ontario would generate over a billion dollars annually to the GDP of the host community, in everything from arena construction, ticket sales, television and media revenues and team merchandising;

"Whereas an NHL franchise would create thousands of jobs in construction, in the hotel and restaurant industry, in tourism, marketing and promotion; and

"Whereas the hockey fans in southern Ontario are known to be the most loyal, supportive and knowledgeable hockey fans in the world; and

"Whereas the NHL Players' Association supports more opportunities for their players in this great southern Ontario hockey market; and

"Whereas the existing NHL owners should recognize the incredible contribution made by the citizens of southern Ontario to the success of the NHL over the last 75 years, and would be wise not to ignore these loyal fans and supporters;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully support bringing the Phoenix Coyotes franchise into a southern Ontario community, and call upon the NHL board of governors not to block the shifting of the franchise to a host community in southern Ontario."

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have the same petition, but I'm going to summarize a bit.

"Whereas Jim Balsillie of Research in Motion has put in an offer to purchase the Phoenix Coyotes and move them to a location in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas there are a number of outstanding communities that could host the NHL franchise, like Kitchener, Waterloo, Hamilton, Mississauga, the city of Vaughan, Peterborough, Brampton, Brantford, Oakville"—they would all make a great home. St. Thomas, Ontario, could be considered too;

"Whereas the NHL franchise would create thousands of jobs in construction, hotel and restaurant industry, tourism, and marketing and promotion; and....

"Whereas the existing NHL owners should recognize the incredible contribution made by the citizens of southern Ontario"—especially the ones in Toronto who have been suffering for so many years with the lousy team they have—"to the success of the NHL over the last 75 years and would be wise not to ignore these loyal fans and supporters;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully support the bringing of the Phoenix Coyotes franchise into a southern Ontario community and to call upon the NHL board of governors not to block the shifting of the franchise to a host community in southern Ontario"—hopefully Vaughan.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a number of petitions here which read as follows:

"Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail' legislation) which permitted GM to underfund the pension" in the first place; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy; and

"Whereas, unlike stakeholders such as vendors and suppliers that accept the risks associated with business, GM retirees and surviving spouses entered into their GM pension plans in good faith, based on the understanding that the funds set aside on their behalf would be secure; and

"Whereas GM's salaried employees contributed a percentage of their annual income to pension plan 0340950 and were permitted only limited contributions to RRSPs due to the federal government's CRA discretionary RRSP restriction for defined benefit plan members" and contributions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo salaried pension organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the pension benefits guarantee fund; and

"That, in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made that General Motors fully fund pension plan 0340950, and that General Motors continue to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with employment entitlements and" requirements under the agreement."

I present this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and beyond.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today: Make it seven: Support the move of the Phoenix Coyotes to southern Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Jim Balsillie of Research in Motion has put in an offer to purchase the Phoenix Coyotes and move them to a location in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas there are a number of outstanding communities that could host this NHL franchise, like Kitchener, Waterloo, Hamilton, Mississauga, the city of Vaughan, Peterborough, Brampton, Brantford and Oakville; and

"Whereas an NHL franchise in southern Ontario would generate over a billion dollars annually to the GDP of the host community, in everything from arena construction, ticket sales, television and media revenues and team merchandising;

"Whereas an NHL franchise would create thousands of jobs in construction, in the hotel and restaurant industry, in tourism, marketing and promotion; and

"Whereas the hockey fans in southern Ontario are known to be the most loyal, supportive and knowledgeable hockey fans in the world; and

"Whereas the NHL Players' Association supports more opportunities for their players in this great southern Ontario hockey market; and

"Whereas the existing NHL owners should recognize the incredible contribution made by the citizens of southern Ontario to the success of the NHL over the last 75 years, and would be wise not to ignore these loyal fans and supporters;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully support bringing the Phoenix Coyotes franchise into a southern Ontario community, and call upon the NHL board of governors not to block the shifting of the franchise to a host community in southern Ontario."

Being from Peterborough, I wholeheartedly support this petition and give it to Myriam.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: This petition is of a serious nature. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the proposed harmonization of the Ontario retail sales tax (RST) with the federal GST has the

potential to increase the cost to many small businesses and their customers; and

"Whereas these added costs would have a devastating impact in difficult times, and organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders' Association have estimated the harmonization would add \$15,000 in new taxes to the price of a new Ontario home;"—shameful—

"Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of the GST and the RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impact of harmonization, so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and hand it to Cooper, one of the new pages.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Bob Delaney: Here's another view: I have a petition here to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me by a group of individuals, mostly from Toronto, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas a global economic downturn calls for bold and decisive action by the government of Ontario to ensure that Ontario remains the most attractive and competitive place in North America to set up or relocate a business, raise a family or build a career; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced a budget that reduces taxes for individuals and businesses, takes immediate steps to aid small businesses and manufacturers and expands training, literacy and apprenticeship programs; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario, with its export-oriented economy and vibrant small business sector, needs to move past a sales tax system that sees a single sales transaction subject to two separate taxes levied by two levels of government under two sets of rules at two different rates and collected by two different bureaucracies;

1530

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the elected members of all parties support the comprehensive set of financial and tax reforms proposed in the 2009-10 Ontario budget, and in particular implement the proposed single sales tax to enable Ontario to emerge from the current economic downturn in a position to enhance its world-leading position and to attract, build and retain the people, careers and companies that will lead our province forward to a prosperous tomorrow."

I agree with this petition, I'm affixing my signature and I'll ask page Kenzie to carry it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Guelph—the member for Cambridge.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. How are things in Newmarket these days?

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by good citizens of Cambridge, which reads:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

"Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government" fulfill "its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

"(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto and provide a copy to Corey.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition signed by people from as far away as Fort McMurray and Sudbury, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has the highest average ... revenue per game in the National Hockey League; and

"Whereas the Toronto Maple Leafs are ranked the most financially valuable team in the NHL; and

"Whereas many Hamilton and greater Toronto area hockey fans are unable to attend professional hockey games due to a lack of adequate ticket supply; and

"Whereas the Hamilton and greater Toronto area boast the biggest and best market in the world for hockey fans, with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment bringing approximately \$2.4 billion to the local economy over 10 years; and

"Whereas a new franchise in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area is valued at \$600 million by some economists; and

"Whereas competition in both business and sports is healthy for both the Hamilton and greater Toronto area economy and sports team performance; and

"Whereas, despite having the most loyal fans in the world, the Toronto Maple Leafs have not won the Stanley Cup in over 40 years; and

"Whereas Hamilton and greater Toronto area fans deserve competitive professional hockey teams;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the government of ... Ontario express its strong support to the board of governors of the National Hockey League for the relocation or expansion of a second NHL hockey team in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area in order to realize the economic advantages to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and to provide healthy competition to the existing Toronto NHL franchise."

I agree with this and will be signing it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a petition from my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients" outside their community; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lake-ridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take" all the "necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate" to a growing community such as Clarington."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and send it with—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from Hamilton and Stoney Creek, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired.

The Chair was tempted to rule the member for Oakville out of order for bringing up the Maple Leafs' record, but I have to remain neutral while I'm in the chair.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAMILY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE DROIT DE LA FAMILLE

Mr. Bentley moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne des questions de droit de la famille et abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la protection contre la violence familiale.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bentley?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I should indicate that I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Willowdale, who has had a lot to do with the preparation of this legislation. I very much appreciate his assistance.

We're now at third-reading stage, and for all members of this House it's decision time. Bill 133 is legislation about protecting those who are the subject of domestic violence, predominantly women and children. Bill 133 is to make sure that those children who are the subject of a judicial custody order are protected in the placement through that order. Bill 133 is about ensuring that the process and the procedures in family law do not unduly keep the parties before the courts, do not dissipate or take away all their monies in the procedures, and make sure we get to the decision time faster. So I say to all members of the House: It's decision time.

Every member of this House has stood up at some point for more than a decade and said that the procedures that exist in our court system to protect those who are the subject or could be the subject of domestic violence, family violence, need improving. In fact, a decade ago, legislation was passed by this House, but it was never proclaimed by the government of the day. It was never proclaimed because the virtually unanimous voice from the front lines of justice—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The minister is referring to something that he's attributing to someone else; indeed, it was his own responsibility.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It's not a point of order.

The Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Domestic Violence Protection Act was not proclaimed by the government of the day. It has not been proclaimed to this day because the virtually unanimous voice from the front lines of justice, from everyone involved, was that it would not advance protection and in fact may make it worse. So we had a situation which required attention, but nothing happened.

Bill 133 will address those issues. Bill 133 will extend meaningful protection to those who are the subject and could be the subject of domestic violence. It will ensure that women, and children in particular, obtain the protection they need quickly, when they need it, in the way they need it. It's decision time for members of this House.

For the children who would be the subject of judicial custody orders, of a judicial determination where a child will be placed, this legislation speaks to the information that should be before the judge. And what is that information that we are suggesting through this legislation? We're suggesting that the judge know about any prior criminal history of the parent or the custodian who would be taking custody. Why wouldn't you want to know that? We're suggesting that there be sworn information before the court, that is, information under oath. Why wouldn't you want to have that? We're suggesting that any history with the children's aid society that the one who is seeking custody has be known to the court. Why wouldn't you want to know that? We're suggesting that any history of court proceedings, Family Court proceedings, that the party seeking custody has be known to the courts. The court can make its determination. The court can make its decision. The court will do what is in the best interests of the child, but the court needs the information essential to that decision to be able to do what's in the best interests of the child. This bill provides for that.

1540

So it's decision time. If we're saying we're going to stand up to protect children, we've got to stand up for the procedures that will protect children. We've got to stand up to make sure that those who make the decisions which affect children have the information they need to actually protect the children. It's not enough. It's not enough to hide behind, "Oh well, this is going to take some more time. This is going to involve more paperwork."

Yes, sometimes you need some extra time to protect children. Sometimes you need extra time to protect children, but let's take the time where it's important. Let's take the time where it will extend protection. Let's take the time to make sure that the judicial decision-maker has the information that he or she requires to act in the best interests of children. That's what this bill is about—no more and no less.

And it's about streamlining procedures. Rather than parties who need to decide on the division of assets spending all of their time, and yes, their money, deciding how to divide the assets, such as a pension, this bill addresses the number 1 ask of the family law bar: one set

of rules to make the decision by—one set of rules. We've taken the good advice of the law commission. We've taken the advice of the family bar. We proposed one set of rules: Divide the asset fairly, divide the asset appropriately, but don't spend all the asset deciding how it's to be divided. This is about streamlining procedures.

This is about making sure that those who have the obligation to pay support to children—their children—disclose annually how much they've got. They're under an order to pay support. This bill is about making sure they disclose what they have—no more, no less.

I say to the members of this House, many—not all—who have spoken passionately about these issues, we have spoken and now it's our opportunity to act. We have said what needs to be said; now it's our opportunity to act on what we've said. If we do not act, I suspect we'll still be speaking 10 years from today about the same issues in the same way with the same concerns. Decision time: This bill protects women, protects children, protects the vulnerable, streamlines procedure. I urge all members of this House to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this bill. As the Attorney General has said, this proposed legislation offers help to and improves protection for women and children across the province of Ontario.

My remarks are going to address a narrow issue within that piece of legislation, namely, the new provisions regarding some changes to the division of pensions on marriage breakup. One of the most valuable assets to be divided between spouses is often the pension. The law is clear that when marriages break down, the right to a pension must be included in calculating the value of a spouse's family property. A payment is made by one spouse to the other to give each an equal amount of the value of their family property, but the current law is not clear about how the value of a pension asset is to be calculated and how payments related to them are to be made to an ex-spouse. As a result, parties have to hire actuaries and lawyers to determine their rights and spend court time defending their positions vis-à-vis the pension.

The family bar has repeatedly said that this issue of the division of pensions is at the top of its priority list for pension reform within family law. The issues around division of pensions in Ontario has been discussed and debated for well over a decade now. Members of the family bar have spent many years of hard work studying this issue and developing recommendations. I and the Attorney General want to thank them for their time and commitment.

Two years ago, the newly established Law Reform Commission of Ontario chose to study pension reform as one of its very first projects. Over the course of the past year, the law reform commission has reviewed the issues, looked at the experiences of other jurisdictions, and spoken with many pension plan administrators and family law and pension lawyers. The law commission released its recommendations in early October of this

past year. These recommendations have greatly assisted us in developing the legislation which we introduced for first reading last fall. We all owe the commission a great debt of gratitude for their hard work and excellent advice.

The government's proposals are based to a large extent on what the law reform commission recommended. Together with the Minister of Finance, we developed the proposed legislations that would clarify division of pensions when marriages break down. Here is how it would work, and I'm somewhat simplifying it: The value of the pension at the date of the separation would be calculated by the pension administrator based on a uniform valuation method. This would allow spouses to agree, or a court to order, that the non-member spouse would be paid the value of his or her share of the plan right away from the pension itself rather than wait for the spouse's retirement. This is something that they cannot do under the current law. Today, it can be very difficult for the spouse with the pension to come up with the money to make the payment. Under the proposed legislation, pension administrators could pay the money out of the assets of the plan—something they can't do under the current law. This would provide separating spouses with more predictability and flexibility and inspire greater confidence in their futures.

By helping to sort out the value of the pensions, we will also free up valuable time in courts. We've heard from the lawyers that an inordinate amount of time is spent on these family law matters, battling over pension calculations and the like.

I just want to offer a couple of other comments, before I sit down, on other aspects of division of assets. We've got some changes that are going to generally make the division of assets fairer as well. These changes would allow a court to balance the obligations of an estate to dependants and heirs with those of a surviving spouse where jointly held property passes automatically to a surviving spouse. It would also provide fairer treatment for debts related to the matrimonial home that were owed. In addition, the legislation would allow parents whose names have been left off a birth certificate to apply to have their surname added to the child's surname.

The Family Law Act has not been significantly amended or reformed in over 20 years. A great deal has changed in two decades. We're learning new and better ways to help protect women and children. We're working to make the law accessible to all Ontarians by making it simpler, faster and more effective.

We ask the support of all members of this House for a family law system that meets the needs of all Ontarians. This legislation does that.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: When the minister was speaking, he made some references which I, in my understanding of the bill and the explanations that have been given to me—it does not do exactly what I think was presented. Now, that can be responded to in their two-minute rebuttal.

Here is the key: In 2000, there was a bill, the Domestic Violence Protection Act, that was presented when we were in government—and I believe it was Minister Jim Flaherty at the time. That bill was approved and voted on through committee and the process—because of the election, it was never assented to law. I introduced a bill, Bill 10, An Act, in memory of Lori Dupont, to better protect victims of domestic violence. In the hearings on this bill, Bill 133, they took specific aim at that bill and the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000, and cancelled it.

What is missing in this bill is the right of victims of domestic violence to get a restraining order seven days a week, 24 hours a day, through a justice of the peace. This bill does not do that, and the impression Mr. Bentley left was that it did do that.

Lori Dupont was killed by an estranged lover. She was a nurse. He was a doctor. There was an inquest held. I had, in fact, been in touch with the family and moved this in memory of Lori Dupont, so I'm confounded by the minister's remarks today.

This bill does not correct the block of time of a victim of domestic violence applying to the courts for a restraining order and then waiting for the courts to hear the case and then being taken down in the interim, waiting for their case or their plea before the courts. So I'm disappointed by the minister representing the information the way he has today. If he doesn't, then he should stand in the House and tell them he is protecting, 24-7, the victims of domestic violence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll be speaking to this bill.

This is third reading. This is it. We've had committee hearings. I suspect that sometime tomorrow the debate will end on third reading and the bill will be put to a vote, and the bill is going to pass. It's a Liberal majority government. The bill is going to pass. Make no mistake about it. That isn't, in and of itself, though, necessarily anything to cheer about.

The bill is very, very problematic, and I'm going to speak about that when I have my chance for my one-hour lead—and not just problematic, but it doesn't do what it purports to do. That creates some serious difficulties because this legislation, as it's going to be promoted by the government, is going to create a false sense of security, if you will, on the part of, amongst others, women and children and people who are concerned, as we all should be—and I'm convinced that we all are—about the welfare of kids.

So I find it passing strange that the comments of the government in their lead on this third reading were notable for their brevity. This is a substantial bit of legislation, and it's remarkable that the minister and his parliamentary assistant—I have great respect for the parliamentary assistant—

Hon. John Gerretsen: And the minister.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have great respect for the minister, as Mr. Gerretsen points out. I like them both,

and I understand that of course they're being paid to do what they do. They have to do it. They don't have a choice. One is in cabinet, and the other is a parliamentary assistant. They're paid a whole lot of money to say what they say here in this chamber, and of course they would be loathe to criticize anything that came from their government because that's the nature of the beast.

I'll have a chance to talk to this further in around 45 minutes. I'm looking forward to the Conservative—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Comme président du Comité permanent de la politique sociale, j'ai eu le privilège d'entendre beaucoup d'Ontariens et Ontariennes qui ont besoin d'assistance dans ce domaine.

As the Chair of the social policy committee, I had the privilege of hearing Ontarians on the Family Statute Law Amendment Act. I think, of course, with the extraordinary detail that this law and the reform act goes through, whether we're dealing with restraining orders or custody hearings or pension reform and child support—those of course are the legal details we were all having to deal with. But I was most impressed and moved by the number of Ontarians who came forward—sometimes in closed sessions, sometimes in private capacity, without wanting to share their stories in a recorded fashion—that it is truly time for the government of this day to act.

In that capacity, I would first of all like to commend the Honourable Christopher Bentley, our Attorney General, for moving on this file. As you'll know, there have been no significant amendments in family statute law for something on the order of two decades. We heard time and time again—occasionally from members opposite, occasionally from the press and certainly from individuals who came forward to our committee—that the whole area of restraining orders, custody hearings, pension reform and child support needs to be strengthened and augmented; and that the full force of the law, in the best interests of Ontarians, needs to really be brought forth. So I would commend Minister Bentley once again on what I consider to be applied compassion or applied justice in his initiatives with regard to Bill 133, the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, and I would urge all members and Ontarians to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to make a few comments on the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's comments on Bill 133. I can tell you right now that our party will not be supporting this legislation in its present form, and what I'll be doing today, in my comments in a few minutes' time, is reading all the amendments our party asked for in the bill, and reading a letter from the family law judges of the Ontario Court of Justice with some of the requests they had, which were completely ignored by this government.

We would like to have supported this bill, but we had no support at all from the government on our amendments—good amendments made by our previous critic,

the member from Whitby—Oshawa—and I look forward to putting a lot of things on record here in a short period of time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Willowdale has two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me just give some sense of what some of the stakeholders think of this legislation. Barbara MacQuarrie, community director, Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women: "Advocates for women and children, certain that the new legislation will help to save lives, welcome the steps this government has taken to bring about these reforms to family law...."

Rosemarie McClean, senior vice-president, member services, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan: "Giving couples the power to settle pension assets at the time that their marriage breaks down is a big win for our members."

Shahina Siddiqui, executive director of the Islamic Social Services Association, says, "We welcome this announcement and support the government's commitment to ensuring the rights and safety of women and children in Ontario."

Dr. Patricia Hughes, executive director of the Law Commission of Ontario: "The Law Commission of Ontario is pleased that our recommendations on division of pensions on marital breakdown have been able to contribute in a substantial way to clarifying this issue that has been frustrating couples."

Heather McGregor, chief executive officer of YWCA Toronto: "YWCA Toronto provides emergency shelter to 547 women and their children each year, many of whom are fleeing violence. This package of reforms will ensure that more of these women are able to keep themselves and their children safe as they move forward to lives free from violence."

I have quite a list of endorsements from various stakeholders, but the point is that there's support for this legislation across the board in the stakeholder community in all respects.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

1600

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to speak today on third reading of Bill 133, the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, in my new role as temporary critic for the Attorney General. It's my first opportunity to do a leadoff speech.

Before I get to the bill itself, I would like to make a few short comments about an event I attended last night that's part of the responsibilities of the Attorney General. It was the 10th anniversary of the North Simcoe Victim Crisis Services—of course, much of this touches on the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, as we move forward with victim services. It was their 10th anniversary—they were established 10 years ago—and they had a wonderful reception and dinner last night at Casino Rama, sponsored by Casino Rama in honour of the people who put in literally thousands and thousands of vol-

unteer hours per year helping victims who have inherited serious disabilities and need the support of the groups. Of course, they work closely with the Ontario Provincial Police.

In particular, I want to thank the executive director of the organization, Mrs. Pat Hehn. She started lobbying for this years ago, before it was accepted by the Attorney General's department, and remains executive director today and is doing a wonderful job as well.

I want to give a special thank you to all the Attorneys General who have worked on this file, starting with Charles Harnick, Jim Flaherty, David Young, Norm Sterling, Michael Bryant and, as well, our current Attorney General, Chris Bentley. They have all supported this particular organization.

I want to say, on behalf of not only this organization but of all the people who provide victim crisis services across the province, a very special thank you to the administration and to all the volunteers who make that happen.

With that, I'd like to go right into Bill 133. I want to say that we would like to have supported this bill. The previous critic for the Attorney General put a lot of thought and work into this bill, but after we put our amendments forward, after listening to the concerns of stakeholders, we think the bill is seriously flawed and we cannot support the bill in its current form.

The previous critic for the Attorney General proposed 16 amendments to the legislation, and I can tell you that those amendments were flatly voted down. There was not even a reason for any of them not being discussed or reasons why the current government would not support them. Her thoughts, as we came back to our caucus, were that we not support legislation where the government just listens to their own side of the House and no one else has any thoughts.

On top of that, I want to also read into the record today a letter from the family law judges of Ontario Court of Justice. It's a very lengthy letter, but I think it describes why they believe the bill is flawed and why there will be problems with it in the future. As we move forward, we will outline some of those.

I also want to say that for a bill as important as this one, I thought there would have been a lot more time spent on the government side actually sending the reasons out to the general public, giving them reasons why we should be supporting this. I think we'll find out today that in the end this bill will pass. It will pass with the government's amendments. As I said earlier—I'm not sure how the third party is responding to this bill, as far as the way they'll vote on it—certainly the Progressive Conservative Party cannot support it in its present form.

With that, I want to move over to the amendments we made in clause-by-clause. They were, I think, important amendments, and I would like to read those amendments into the record and the reasons for the amendments in each particular case.

The first amendment was done by Ms. Elliott. She moved that "clause 21(2)(b) of the Children's Law

Reform Act, as set out in section 6 of the bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

"(b) information respecting the person's current or previous involvement as a party in any family proceeding, including a proceeding under part III of the Child and Family Services Act (child protection), or as an accused in any criminal proceeding if the proceeding resulted in a finding of guilt or is ongoing; and"

The reason that Ms. Elliott gave for putting this forward is:

"The purpose of submitting this application ... is to limit and focus the information that's needed to be presented to the court, in order to respond to some of the concerns expressed by presenters that this was too open-ended a section before."

Following that, Mr. Kormos commented on it. There were no comments coming from the government. The government defeated the PC motion on that one.

The second amendment that Ms. Elliott presented was the following:

"I move that subsection 21.1(1) of the Children's Law Reform Act, as set out in section 7 of the bill, be amended by striking out 'Every person who applies under section 21 for custody of a child and who is not a parent of the child' at the beginning and substituting 'Every person who applies under section 21 for custody of or access to a child.'

"The purpose of this amendment is to expand with respect to custody and access and to apply to the child's biological parent or anyone who's applying for custody, if it's the child's best interests that are paramount, which is the case."

That was discussed somewhat by Mr. Kormos of the third party. There were no comments that came from the government on that motion as well, and it was defeated by the government.

The third amendment by Ms. Elliott on this was the following:

"I move that subsection 21.2(2) of the Children's Law Reform Act, as set out in section 8 of the bill, be amended by striking out 'Every person who applies under section 21 for custody of a child and who is not a parent of the child' at the beginning and substituting 'Every person who applies under section 21 for custody of or access to a child.'

"It's for the reasons stated with respect to the previous amendment" that we would move forward with this one. The government defeated that amendment as well.

Then we moved over to the fourth amendment. Ms. Elliott moved this one: "I move that subsections 21.3(1) and (2) of the Children's Law Reform Act, as set out in section 9 of the bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

"Other proceedings

"Application by non-parent

"21.3(1) Where an application for custody of a child is made by a person who is not a parent of the child, the clerk of the court shall provide to the court and to the parties information in writing respecting any current or

previous family proceeding in which the child or any person who is a party to the application is or was involved as a party.

“Same

“(2) Where an application for custody of a child is made by a person who is not a parent of the child, the court may require the clerk of the court to provide to the court and to the parties information in writing respecting any current or previous criminal proceeding in which any person who is a party to the application and who is not a parent of the child is or was involved as an accused, if the proceeding resulted in a finding of guilt or is ongoing.”

“This amendment is made simply to limit the information that would be coming forward, just to be more specific, that it needs to be a family proceeding in which they were a party and if there was a finding of guilt found in a criminal proceeding.”

Again, Mr. Kormos made comments on that. I won't read them all. However, the government soundly defeated that without any comment on it.

Ms. Elliott made her fifth amendment, and she moved “that the bill be amended by adding the following section:

“9.1 The act is amended by adding the following section:

““Children’s Lawyer

“21.4(1) Despite subsection 21(2) and sections 21.1, 21.2 and 21.3, documents and information required to be provided to or filed with the court under any of those provisions in respect of an application for custody or access shall instead be provided to the Children’s Lawyer if any of the following circumstances apply:

“1. The application is unopposed.

“2. Any party to the application is unrepresented.

“3. The court determines that it is in the best interests of the child.

“Investigation and report

“(2) If the Children’s Lawyer receives documents or information under subsection (1) in respect of an application for custody or access, the Children’s Lawyer shall cause an investigation into the matter to be made under section 112 of the Courts of Justice Act and shall report and make recommendations to the court in accordance with that section.

1610

“Powers of court

“(3) Upon receipt of the report of the Children’s Lawyer, the court may,

“(a) require the Children’s Lawyer to provide to it any documents or information that the Children’s Lawyer received under subsection (1); or

“(b) require any person or body to provide such additional documents or information in relation to the application as the court directs.”

“This amendment is in response to the letter sent to the committee by the Family Court justices, the Family Lawyers Association and numerous private practitioners, that the system, as proposed by Bill 133, for investigating the custody of children is unwieldy, unworkable and

unlikely to achieve the purpose intended, which is to protect children.

“This addresses the concerns that the unrepresented parties will have no reasonable means of working their way through the applications and the various submissions that they need to be making, and it also requires self-reporting, which, according to one of the presenters, was not something that you should base your premise on; it’s something that you just rely on their honesty in bringing some of this information forward; plus the fact that these documents, especially with respect to a parenting plan, are going to be very difficult for unrepresented applicants to prepare on their own.

“Since there’s no indication that there’s going to be extensive support for legal aid in the future or someone to help the people complete these documents, I would submit that the preparation of a report following an investigation by the Children’s Lawyer is the most cost-effective and easiest way to make sure that children are protected. Certainly, that has been advocated by the courts, which, again, are being placed in a very difficult position of having piles of material placed before them, as” the third party critic “has indicated, most of which may be irrelevant in the course of determining the whole issue. In order to save court time, to not put the judge in the position of an investigator and to assist the unrepresented parties to the action, I would submit that to have the Office of the Children’s Lawyer submit an investigation report would be the best way to handle the situation.”

Again, that was the fifth amendment. There were some comments by Mr. Kormos of the third party, and it was soundly defeated by the government without any comment at all to her very, very detailed amendment.

Then we move over to the sixth amendment made by Ms. Elliott. She moved “that subsection 35(2) of the Children’s Law Reform Act, as set out in section 15 of the bill, be struck out.” She submitted that “this section is unnecessary, that the restraining orders already provide for these types of restrictions.”

This was soundly defeated as well without any comments from anyone on it.

Then we move over to the seventh amendment. Ms. Elliott moved “that subsection 70(3) of the Children’s Law Reform Act, as set out in section 18 of the bill, be amended by adding ‘with notice to the parties to the application referred to in that subsection’ at the end.

“This is simply to ensure that notice is given of this application”—again, soundly defeated without any comments or questions from the government members.

Then we move over to amendment number 8. Ms. Elliott moved “that section 70 of the Children’s Law Reform Act, as set out in section 18 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

“Offence

“(5) Every person who contravenes an order made under subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not more than \$25,000.”

“It just simply adds significant penalties for non-compliance.”

Again, amendment number 8 by Ms. Elliott was soundly defeated without any questions or comments from the government members.

Then we move to amendment number 9. Ms. Elliott moved "that the bill be amended by adding the following section after the heading 'Family Law Act':

"21.1 The Family Law Act is amended by adding the following section:

""Orders regarding conduct

"2.1 In making any order under this act, the court may also make an interim order prohibiting, in whole or in part, a party from directly or indirectly contacting or communicating with another party, if the court determines that the order is necessary to ensure that an application under this act is dealt with justly."

"This is a housekeeping amendment, essentially, because this was repeated in three sections of the bill—27, 29 and 36—so this simplifies by adding this provision to be applicable to the entire act."

That amendment number 9 was soundly defeated without any comments or questions from the government members.

That took us to amendment number 10. Ms. Elliott moved "that clause (c) of the definition of 'property' in subsection 4(1) of the Family Law Act, as set out in subsection 22(3) of the bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

"(c) in the case of a spouse's rights under a pension plan that have vested or that may vest or be granted in the future, the net family law value of the spouse's interest in the plan, as determined in accordance with section 10.1, for the period beginning with the date of the marriage and ending on the valuation date; ('bien')"

"This amendment has been suggested to deal with the significant unfairness, expressed to us by several presenters, to the non-pension-holding spouse if one uses only one value for equalization purposes. This just indicates that it would include, for a pension purpose, the rights that have already vested or that may be vesting in the future, the so-called contingent rights."

That's amendment number 10. Again, without any comments from the government, without any questions or any reasons, it was soundly defeated by the government members.

Then we go to the last six amendments, all of which I want to put on record here because I think it is important that they are on the record of Hansard for the future, when we think that this bill will fail.

Ms. Elliott moved, in her amendment number 11, "that subsection 46(3) of the Family Law Act, as set out in section 35 of the bill, be struck out.

"This has been proposed, Mr. Chair, because it's redundant. The restraining orders can already provide for the orders that are set out in this section."

Again, amendment number 11 was completely voted down by the government without any questions or comments or reasons whatever.

Amendment number 12: Ms. Elliott moved "that section 56.1 of the Family Law Act, as set out in section

37 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

"Transition,

"(2) This section applies whether the valuation date is before, on or after the date on which this section comes into force but it does not apply to a domestic contract made before the date on which this section comes into force."

"Simply a transition provision ... to make sure that it's consistent throughout" the bill.

That's amendment number 12, and again amendment number 12 was voted down by the government members without any questions to Ms. Elliott or comments or any regard for some of her fine work in this amendment. It was completely defeated.

That takes us to amendment number 13 by Ms. Elliott. She moved that "(0.1) Section 69 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

""(1.1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing the meaning of "relating to the acquisition or significant improvement of a matrimonial home" for the purposes of clause (b) of the definition of "net family property" in subsection 4(1)."

"This amendment was proposed in response to some concerns expressed by presenters" at the hearings "that there were other considerations to be brought to bear, this being one of them, in the determination of net family property."

Again, it was soundly defeated without a question or a comment by the government members.

The 14th amendment made by Ms. Elliott: She moved "that subsections 67.2(2) and (3) of the Pension Benefits Act be amended by striking out 'ancillary benefits' wherever it appears and substituting in each case 'additional non-vested benefits'—simply to conform with the wording that was used by the actuaries with respect to vested and non-vested or contingent benefits."

Again, her 14th amendment, without a comment or a question, was soundly defeated by the government members.

That takes us to her 15th amendment in the clause-by-clause. Ms. Elliott moved "that subsection 67.3(5) of the Pension Benefits Act, as set out in section 48 of the bill, be amended by striking out 'net family law value' and substituting 'commuted value.'

"Again, this is to suggest that there may be more than one value that may be applicable in determining the net family law property."

That was soundly defeated by the government members without a question or a comment.

1620

The very last amendment made by Ms. Elliott in clause-by-clause was amendment number 16. Ms. Elliott moved "that subsection 67.4(5) of the Pension Benefits Act, as set out in section 48 of the bill, be amended by striking out 'net family law value' and substituting 'commuted value.'

"This has been added for the same reasons as the previous amendment, to suggest that there may be more than one value that may be applicable here."

Again, in clause-by-clause, the 16th amendment made by the Progressive Conservative critic, Ms. Elliott, was soundly defeated without any questions.

Quite frankly, in the amendments and clause-by-clause there was really no committee discussion by the parliamentary assistant, no questions, no concerns; it was just soundly defeated without any kind of comments coming back from the government members.

That takes us to the second half of my presentation. I know that the critic for the third party wants to get going on this pretty soon himself. We felt that the letter that came to the Standing Committee on Social Policy from the family law judges of the Ontario Court of Justice—it's not that common for judges to make a presentation, but we thought that their letter should be read into the record. I'm pleased to do that, and I will. It's addressed:

"Re: Bill 133 Submission," and it's written to Mr. Katch Koch, the clerk of the standing committee.

"Dear Mr. Koch:

"We write as family law judges of the Ontario Court of Justice who are concerned about some of the provisions of Bill 133, which is currently before the Legislature. We recognize that the bill is motivated by a desire to improve the process whereby custody orders are made in Ontario. In particular, we acknowledge that the government intends, as do we, that courts be in a position to make well-informed decisions in matters affecting children's well-being. Unfortunately, in our view, the legislation in its current form will have significant and unintended negative consequences for the administration of justice in our courts.

"We wish to specifically address clauses 6 to 10 of the bill, the clauses relating to custody applications in our courts. In our view, these sections will be difficult, expensive and burdensome to implement, if they can be implemented at all. If they are implemented, we believe custody applications will become so complicated that many applications will be delayed, deferred or withdrawn. Applying for a custody order in family court will be more onerous and the process of adjudicating family law cases will be more cumbersome. Our greatest concern is that, in the end, the family law process will be less accessible to the people of this province. In our view, such an outcome, while not intended, will be contrary to the best interests of the children involved in custody applications.

"The provisions of the legislation we wish to comment on are procedural. In this submission, we confine ourselves to the question of the impact of these new procedures on the administration of justice in our courts.

"We begin with the most obvious principle: The work of the family court is to administer justice in family matters according to law. The basic rules of natural justice which have governed the adversarial process in Canada since before Confederation are not cast aside in child custody cases. Family law is law. This means family law is not social work or debt collection. In the child custody context, it means that the determination of a child's best interests occurs in a legal framework. This

framework includes constitutional norms, common law jurisprudence, family law legislation, rules of evidence and rules of court. The search for truth in a custody case, as in any other kind of legal case, takes place in a process which respects the entitlement of all parties to procedural fairness. Family cases require formal legal pleadings, and judges make decisions by applying the law to proven facts. A judge determines what facts are proven by applying well-tested evidentiary rules, considering the burden of proof and assessing the merits of legal arguments.

"As a society, we trust judges to fill the role of impartial, dispassionate arbiter and unbiased fact-finder. We expect judges to carefully, neutrally and fairly assess all sides of a case. Judges understand that they are expected to meet this high standard. The importance of a society's confidence in judges cannot be overemphasized. If parties do not respect the process that leads to a court order, they cannot be expected to respect the order. It is critical therefore that statutory changes affecting the administration of justice in the courts be closely evaluated on the extent to which they impact on the appearance of justice and judicial neutrality in the courts.

"In our system of justice, as appeal courts have told us repeatedly, judges are not charged with the task of being investigators. It is improper for judges to assume this role. If we turn judges into investigators, as this legislation proposes, we risk compromising justice and the appearance of justice in our courts.

"Some might suggest that in Ontario there has been a relaxation of formal legal requirements as a result of the case management system which is used in the family courts, and that a further relaxation of traditional rules is sustainable. We do not agree. In the case management system, judges supervise the progress of cases through the court, and assist the parties, through frank discussion at case conferences, to find an early resolution.

"Nonetheless, despite the outward appearance of informality, the underlying process of family law in the Ontario courts remains a structured legal civil litigation process. This means that regardless of the informality of the conference, the judge is directing the parties to find a resolution which accords with existing family law legislation and jurisprudence. In doing so, the judge at a conference is continuously assessing the parties' factual assertions against what would be admissible in terms of formal evidentiary standards. The less formal process is conducted in the shadow of the law. If resolution is not achieved through case conferences, issues in dispute are determined through the formal process of motions or trials.

"Judges deciding custody cases are aware of their duty to ensure that the decision they make will be in the child's best interests. The entire thrust of custody law is encompassed in the notion that the child's best interests are the paramount consideration in every case. It is impossible for judges not to bring this elementary awareness to bear in their day-to-day work. We reject the view, advanced by some, that our courts are so overloaded that judges are too busy to address this critical issue in each

case. This is not our experience. However, in a court system which is critically underpopulated by lawyers, the task of judges becomes more difficult.

"Today Family Court judges in Ontario are expected to make crucial legal decisions affecting the well-being of children in an environment which is being degraded by the disappearance of family lawyers. This problem is likely most acute in the provincial family courts, where parties of modest means come to seek a resolution of their urgent family problems. These litigants cannot afford lawyers and cannot qualify for legal aid. They cannot afford child psychologists, custody assessors, parenting co-ordinators, and private mediators.

"Even if they did have access to these resources, the litigants in our courts may have the kind of problem that cannot be resolved through mediation and parent information programs. They may be isolated for cultural or language reasons. Their partner may have substance abuse or mental health issues. There may be violence in the home. These litigants need to go to court because they need a court order to protect themselves and their children, and they have the right and even the obligation to do so to protect their children's best interests.

"Vast numbers of Family Court litigants are unable to retain lawyers to represent them. For the past number of years legal services in our courts have been delivered primarily by per diem duty counsel ('legal aid lawyers' paid by the day/not privately retained). Parties who by any calculation are 'the working poor' do not qualify for legal aid. They do not even qualify for duty counsel services. They are unrepresented.

"Those people who do qualify for duty counsel services (although not for legal aid) are represented by counsel who have inadequate time to interview them to ensure that their cases can be presented properly to the court. Duty counsel do not assist in the preparation of motions and affidavits. Duty counsel do not represent parties at motions or trials. Pleadings are drafted by volunteer law students, or by self-represented parties, who have limited knowledge of the evidentiary requirements of relevance and reliability. Duty counsel do not maintain files. A party coming to court twice will likely see two different duty counsel. There is no continuity.

1630

"The role of counsel, which is critical to a properly functioning legal system, is no longer being filled by retained lawyers who are bound by ethical duties not only to advance their client's interests, but also to ensure that relevant, admissible, reliable evidence is before the court in child custody cases. Parties must represent themselves.

"The family law legal system is complex. Self-represented parties are at a tremendous disadvantage. They may not even speak English. These parties are not in court because they enjoy the experience. They are there because they have a legal problem which requires, and is capable of, a legal solution. They have little or no knowledge of the governing laws, how the legal system works, and what kind of evidence they need to prove their case. The challenge facing the judge who has to find

the facts, and make the best decision in these circumstances, is immense. In other words, we understand the legislator's concern because it is our concern.

"The test for the court to apply in custody cases is, 'What order is in the best interests of the children involved?' In deciding this question, the court will consider all circumstances that are relevant to the child's interests. The task of sifting through the endless facts of a family's history to find those that will assist the court to make a proper determination used to fall on lawyers. Where parties are unrepresented, the court's challenge is to focus the parties on the need to provide reliable, relevant information. However, a party's determination of relevance is often coloured by self-interest. This problem is particularly serious when parties are unrepresented and matters are unopposed.

"It is believed that the adversarial system works because each party, in theory, will attempt to put its best foot forward. The adversarial system is also premised on the notion that, in the contest between the parties to litigation, each will raise issues about the other that the other might choose not to disclose. In these ways, and subject to legal admissibility, the adversarial system produces relevant information to a court about all parties to the litigation. When cases are unopposed, or proceed on a consensual basis, there is a danger that this information does not reach the court.

"There is an obvious solution to this problem. There was a time in relatively recent memory in this province when every uncontested divorce case required a report from the official guardian confirming that the proposed custodial arrangements were adequate. This is no longer the case. The Office of the Children's Lawyer now has the discretion to refuse to accept a case. However, an investigation by the Children's Lawyer is, in our view, the clear solution to the problem of custody cases where parties are unrepresented, or where an application is unopposed, and a judge has reason to be concerned adequate information is not being provided to the court. This solution addresses a critical problem in the courts while respecting the need for judges to maintain their traditional and crucial role as independent adjudicators in the adversarial system.

"The role of the investigators from the Office of the Children's Lawyer is to investigate custody claims, and the Office of the Children's Lawyer is thus well placed to investigate custody claims in unopposed cases where the court has reason to believe the information before it is inadequate. Social workers employed by the Office of the Children's Lawyer have the training, skill and knowledge necessary to conduct such investigations and to provide a recommendation to the court. They are well acquainted with the daunting task of obtaining information from children's aid societies and the police. They are well educated in addressing privacy issues. They have protocols for dealing with records. Investigators from the Office of the Children's Lawyer are able to interview friends, family, neighbours, teachers, doctors and social workers regarding the welfare of a child, and to report the results

to the court. We have relied upon these reports since the office was founded.

"Bill 133 proposes that judges be the ones to conduct the kind of investigation that should be done by trained investigators employed by the Office of the Children's Lawyer. Sections 6, 7, 8 and 9, all contemplate that information regarding prior child protection proceedings, previous family law proceedings, and the results of criminal record checks will be placed before the court. However, for the relevant agencies merely to advise the court the records exist will be in and of itself unhelpful. Unless a judge sees the actual records, he or she cannot determine relevance. If the judge requires and directs that further information be provided, the extent of the records flowing to the court is potentially enormous. How will these records be obtained and where will they be maintained? Who will see them? Who will interpret them to the judge? Who will weigh the privacy interests of the numerous collateral parties whose identity is revealed in these records? Who will determine relevance and how?

"In addition, once in possession of these records, how is a judge to evaluate a serious allegation in a file of a child protection agency that has been neither validated nor discounted. Do we enter upon an inquiry that may lead nowhere? Or do we ignore an allegation that might have merit? We have no social workers attached to our courts to follow up with inquiries. Unlike the Office of the Children's Lawyer, we have no trained investigators. A court is not equipped to administer a scheme of this nature, nor are judges equipped to conduct the kind of investigations contemplated. We are convinced Bill 133 does not provide a workable system.

"We are also concerned about the impact of this legislation on access to our courts.

"In section 6 of the amendments, all applications are required to file an affidavit setting out not only a proposed parenting plan, but information about all previous court proceedings, whether domestic or child protection, and 'any other information known to the person to be relevant.'

"Section 7 of the amendments provides that an applicant who is not a parent of a child must file the results of a police records check.

"Section 8 requires a non-parent to submit a request for child protection records. Within 30 days of receiving the request, the society is to send a report to the court. Twenty days after the report is received, the clerk is to provide the parties with a copy of the report and place a copy in the file.

"Section 9 requires the clerk of the court, in the case of a non-parent application, to provide to the court and the parties information in writing respecting previous family proceedings 'involving the child or any person who is party ... and is not a parent.' The court may also require the clerk to provide to the court and to the parties information in writing regarding current or previous criminal proceedings involving a non-parent party.

"These types of requirements do not take into account the 'facts on the ground' in our courts. Many parties

come to court in urgent circumstances. Commonly, an abused woman is seeking an urgent temporary custody order after fleeing with her child to a shelter. Many such applicants do not speak English. Who is going to help them complete the required affidavit? A recent effort by duty counsel in one local court to assist an applicant in completing a prototype affidavit and parenting plan consumed over an hour of duty counsel's time. No duty counsel can spend an hour with each unrepresented party. Can we expect a manifold increase in duty counsel to assist these parties? Furthermore, how, at this early stage, is this desperate applicant, who is in a shelter without money or a home, going to have a parenting plan? If the affidavit is not completed, the application will not be issued. If there is no application, there is no case. If there is no case, there can be no emergency temporary order in the case. How will this assist the best interests of this applicant's children?

"Many non-parents applying for custody do so for immigration or educational reasons. Others do so in more urgent circumstances. Perhaps a relative is seeking custody because a child's parent was injured in an accident. Perhaps a child refugee claimant from Darfur is living with an aunt and wants to attend school. Or a child who is living in northern Ontario moves to a different community where there is a school that better meets his or her needs. A custody order is required if a child is to be enrolled in school, or if a caregiver is to arrange for medical care for a child.

"Who is going to assist these non-parent applicants to obtain all the information required of them? How long will the application be in front of the court before the requisite information is obtained? The difficulties occasioned by these inquiries will cause serious delays. How will the non-parent caregiver communicate with schools and doctors in the absence of a custody order? And what happens when the estranged and angry parent or partner of the injured parent learns that the grandparent had a shoplifting conviction 10 years ago, or was investigated by a child protection agency because of a malicious complaint? Or learns the name and address of service providers and begins to harass them? There is no question this legislation will foment litigation and that the information required will cast a chill on applicants. Some will simply choose not to bother with the application. Considering the importance of custody orders in all circumstances affecting a child, and considering the benefits rising from a court's ability to scrutinize a custody transfer, this will be an unfortunate outcome.

"The timeline provided for organizing the information required under these provisions will seriously delay cases and frustrate the court's ability to make necessary decisions in a timely manner. Our courts are presently underresourced with clerical staff. Court staff are not trained to monitor the receipt of material. The clerk is given tremendous responsibilities under this legislation. Where will the time and staff come from to fulfill these duties? What work of the court won't get done so that the clerk can attend to these new obligations?

"Judges under this legislation may have to review large quantities of notes, reports, assessments, records of telephone calls and all manner of child protection or police records. Any number of persons and entities may have a residual privacy interest in this matter. Police criminal files and child protection files may contain highly sensitive material including: outlines of unproven allegations; statements of complainants or witnesses—at times concerning very personal matters; personal addresses and phone numbers; photographs; medical reports; bank statements; search warrant information; results of assessments; criminal records; voluminous notes—the list is endless. None of this material will have been screened for likely relevance or for privacy concerns. It is critical for the effective administration of justice that proceedings remain focused on the issues involved and that scarce judicial resources not be squandered in 'fishing expeditions' for relevant evidence. How is this to be managed?"

1640

"We believe there is time to reconsider alternatives to the unwieldy and intrusive scheme proposed in this legislation. There is time to consider requiring the children's lawyer to provide reports in situations deemed to pose a risk to the child by legislation or by the court. This is not a crisis. The committee should be aware that judges hear warning bells all the time in custody cases. When we hear them and parties are unrepresented or a matter is unopposed and we have ascertained a child protection or criminal history, we call in the children's aid society or we adjourn for further and better evidence. If a society is involved, we ask for a letter or for a social worker to come to court. We direct parties to produce report records and letters from schools, from doctors or from psychiatrists.

"All of these concerns we have raised in this letter suggest to us that if this legislation is implemented as drafted, Family Court will be less accessible to those who require its services. There be increased delay and difficulty in adjudicating custody claims. There will be a strong disincentive to any party applying to a court for a custody order. Thin resources will be stretched even thinner. It will be more difficult to address urgent family problems. In the end, a difficult process will be made even more difficult for the children and families who require custody orders from our court."

This was signed by a number of justices: Justice Marion Cohen, Justice Geraldine Waldman, Justice John Kukurin, Justice Harvey Brownstone, Justice Wendy Malcolm, Justice Marc Bode, Justice Penny Jones, Justice Brian Weagant, Justice Doug Maund, Justice Heather Katarynych, Justice Stanley Sherr and Justice Robert Spence. When I heard the parliamentary assistant speak earlier about all the supportive quotes he had from people supporting the bill, I didn't hear any from this group of people.

I think the letter that came from the judges was a brave move on their part. We support many of the things they said in this letter, and because of this and because

they were basically ignored in the legislation, we cannot support Bill 133 for two reasons: First, the fact that the government didn't listen to any of our amendments, we felt, was a slap in the face; and secondly, ignoring a lot of the comments made by the judges was another slap in the face to the citizens of Ontario.

With that I'll say, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party, that we will not be supporting this legislation, and we know that in the future there will be many amendments made to the legislation to get it right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):
Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened carefully to the capable contribution to this debate by the Conservative member. I'm very familiar with the now-notorious judges' letter, and while I will not read all of it, it having been read once, I will be making reference to it in a few minutes' time when I have my opportunity, on behalf of the New Democrats, to speak to this bill on third reading.

This bill is very, very troubling, because the government presents it as some sort of solution to any number of problems, and the bill in fact reveals that the government doesn't understand or isn't prepared to acknowledge what the problems really are, never mind the fact that the bill fails to provide a solution to any of the real existing and current problems in the system.

Make no mistake about it: The thrust of Bill 133, as it applies to custody, is the result of the slaughter of young Katelynn Sampson, who was handed over to the woman now charged with, albeit not convicted of, her vicious murder under the supervision of a judge. Katelynn wasn't abducted. Katelynn didn't wander way from home into a strange part of town. A provincial judge signed off on it. A provincial judge handed her over to the woman charged, along with that woman's male partner, with her vicious—the charges were upgraded to first-degree murder. It doesn't happen a whole lot of times. Most murder charges are second-degree. So I'm going to talk about the Katelynns of Ontario, the children of Ontario.

This bill, in a most incredible way, repeals the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000. Ontario finally acquired a stand-alone legislative regime addressing domestic violence, and the Liberal government repeals it in an indefensible way, and I'm going to be talking about that in just a few minutes' time as well.

The government imposes a pension severance formula that is formulaic and that doesn't understand or accommodate the subtleties and the subjective qualities in determining pension value, and I will speak to that as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):
Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I had the chance to listen to the member from Simcoe North, for a little bit less than one hour, speaking about Bill 133, the family law reform act. I sat on that committee and I listened to many different stakeholders and advocates from across the province of Ontario who came and presented to our committee and spoke about different elements of the bill. I know not all

of them came to support the bill, and the member from Simcoe North outlined many of them, but he also failed to mention how many people came and spoke in support. Prominent people came from London, from Windsor, from Toronto, from every area.

The PA of the Ministry of the Attorney General outlined many, many prominent people who came in support of the bill and outlined why they are supporting the bill. They support it because it's a very important step toward reform of the family act to protect families, protect women, protect children and create some kind of safety mechanism for many, many women across the province of Ontario to live in peace and tranquility.

It doesn't matter what kind of bill we introduce, we're not going to cover every piece of the puzzle. But in the end, I think this bill is an important step toward reform of the family act in this province in order to create that safety mechanism I spoke about.

I regret to hear that the member from Simcoe North and his party will not support the bill, because this bill speaks to support the families in the province of Ontario.

I know it's a part of the democratic process, and I am looking forward to listening to the member from Welland, even though I know what he stands for. He is not going to be speaking nicely about the bill or the government.

Regardless, I'm going to support this bill and hopefully the rest of my caucus will support it too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend the member from Simcoe North, who has done a stellar job in presenting what we think are consistent arguments as to why we can't support this Bill 133.

Also, I want to put on record the work done by the member for Whitby-Oshawa, Christine Elliott, who's busy speaking to the people of Ontario as we speak.

The really important thing here is to realize that the bill does not do what we had requested be done, both as the member has stated—as well as my bill, Bill 10, which was the Lori Dupont Act, which really would have allowed victims of domestic violence to have access to a restraining order seven days a week, 24 hours a day. That simply is not in the bill.

There are about seven acts that are being amended in this omnibus bill. That's the nature of the bill. I would suggest that they're trying to rush it through—I'm not sure why—to give the appearance that they're actually doing something on the issue of domestic violence.

I am interested in the member from Welland and his remarks, because he's a long-standing advocate for protection in that area.

1650

The one thing that really hasn't been talked about today is more voice for the children, victims of domestic violence. We can talk about all the amendments to the seven acts—the Children's Law Reform Act, the Child and Family Services Act, etc.—but really, at the end of the day, it's making sure that children and families have

access to protection, both from the perpetrators of violence and, as well, in the courts themselves, whether it's in a custody battle or other battles, which I'm sure all of the members in our constituency offices are familiar with.

But I do want to put on the record that we cannot support it because it really doesn't go far enough in protecting victims of domestic violence. More can be said, and I'm sure there will be more debate on this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

The member for York North—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Simcoe North.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Simcoe North. You have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the members who responded to my lead-off on third reading of Bill 133.

There's not a lot more I can say. We looked at this bill very carefully. I know my predecessor, the member from Whitby-Oshawa, put a tremendous amount of time into this bill. She worked with stakeholders, had numerous meetings with a lot of the stakeholders, and quite simply, in the end, was not satisfied that the bill did what she was prepared to accept. The recommendation from our caucus is not to support the bill in its current form. The reason I wanted to have the letter on record from the judges of the Ontario Court of Justice is that they made numerous comments and concerns on the content of this bill and some of the weaknesses of the bill which have not been addressed by the amendments made by the government.

I also want to say, as we go through these bills, that just because the government wants a bill to pass—when opposition parties go to a lot of trouble to draft amendments, I think it's almost incumbent upon the government, although I know it's not required, that they respond with good reasons why a certain amendment would not be accepted by the government. We don't see that. The amendments here were actually almost disgraceful in that the government never responded to one of the amendments of our critic for the Attorney General, Ms. Elliott. They were good, solid amendments that were ignored by the government, and it's just another reason why this Legislature really isn't working to the best of its ability, when the opposition members are ignored.

Thank you very much for the time today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item number 22 and Mr. Klees assumes ballot item number 29.

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: As I indicated, this bill is going to pass. It's going to pass because there's a majority government and because government caucus members, backbenchers, are disinclined to not support government legislation.

Two of the most important components, from the perspective of the NDP, are, one, the issue of the extent to which this legislation protects women from violence, and, two, whether it protects children. Third, we have the concern around whether this legislation protects spouses, partners, when there's a breakdown of the relationship and the severance or division of pension assets.

There have been a few myths perpetrated—well, more than a few—around this legislation. Let me deal first, please, with section 21 of Bill 133. It's very straightforward and simple: "The Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000 is repealed." That, in and of itself, is a shocking thing for this government to be doing—shocking, disturbing, irresponsible—and the repeal of the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000, puts women at risk. Amazing. Absolutely amazing.

The government counters with its section 35, which replaces the current section 35. Section 35, as proposed by the government in this bill, provides for restraining orders that can be enforced via the Criminal Code. This, of course, is applauded by some women's groups. In fact, there were two. Ms. Elliott and I took special note when we listened to their comments and read their written submissions.

We were graced with the presence of Pamela Cross and Amanda Dale from YWCA Toronto—very imperial in their presentation. They opened with a finger-wagging admonition to us: "We urge the committee to set aside partisan point-scoring to hear what we have to say from our considerable experience in this area." You remember them, don't you, Parliamentary Assistant? They made it clear that they do not support any move to maintain the Domestic Violence Protection Act.

They added to that declaration the fantastic statement, "We don't want to take too much time today to talk about" this, "but since we know that some committee members ... favour the DVPA"—that's the Domestic Violence Protection Act—"over Bill 133, we ... make the following comments." What a stupid thing to say. Both Ms. Elliott and Mr. Dunlop, on behalf of the Conservatives, and I made it very clear that we support section 35 of the bill—very clear. It was incredible and oh, so misinformed for these presenters to somehow suggest that the opposition members—because they sure as heck weren't suggesting that the government members didn't support Bill 133 and preferred the Domestic Violence Protection Act.

The government applauds itself by saying, "Bill 35 creates a restraining order that can be enforced under the Criminal Code of Canada." What that means, of course, is that, rather than the person being brought back before the judge for what amounts to, in effect, almost a contempt citation for breaching the so-called or apparently "civil" restraining order, a person who breaches the Criminal Code-enforced restraining order, which is section 35, can be arrested—will be arrested, almost inevitably—and will probably be held in custody and forced to go through a bail hearing. And that's a good thing.

What nobody was telling anybody was that the intervention order, the restraining order, in the Domestic Violence

Protection Act, 2000, was also one that could be enforced under the Criminal Code of Canada. That's why New Democrats supported that legislation back in 2000, when it was introduced by then-Attorney General Jim Flaherty.

How ironic that Ms. Elliott, who knows Mr. Flaherty well, was sitting on the committee that deliberated on the repeal of that legislation.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: She does know him very well, and I understand for some period of time. They have many common interests.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Three.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Three, I'm told—

Interjection: Triplets.

Mr. Peter Kormos:—and I have read.

Let's understand the distinction between section 35 in this government's legislation and the intervention order under section 4 of the Domestic Violence Protection Act.

The intervention order, or restraining order, under section 4 of the Domestic Violence Protection Act is one that could be enforced, and had to be enforced, by police pursuant to the Criminal Code for breach of a court order. It was available "when a designated judge or justice is satisfied, on a balance of probabilities," that domestic violence has occurred, that a person or property is at risk, and that the matter, in the instance of an ex parte order, must be dealt with on an urgent, albeit temporary, basis.

1700

Let's be clear here: The vast majority of people seeking restraining orders are women. For a woman who is at risk, and who fears for her life or for the lives or welfare of her children, to get a restraining order under the government's section 35, she has to appear before a Family Court judge. That may well take not just weeks but could take months. You have to initiate process; there have to be papers served on the offending or dangerous spouse.

The beauty of the Domestic Violence Protection Act, section 4, is that you could obtain ex parte orders, without notice, and you could obtain them 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You didn't have to wait your turn in a crowded courthouse, like down at 311 Jarvis Street—as a matter of fact, at any one of them in any part of this province; I suspect that most members have had occasion to be in their local courthouses for any number of reasons. Our family courts are among the busiest and most poorly staffed—I'm not talking about the quality of staff but the staffing numbers—and many of them are in old buildings.

Gosh, go down to 311 Jarvis Street and it's sausage-factory justice. You've got juvenile court—young offender court—in the same building as Family Court. You've got little hoods running around with tattoos and piercings, up on charges ranging from soup to nuts, from shoplifting to armed robbery. Then you've got the Family Court in there, dealing with matrimonial matters, domestic matters and custody matters with kids. You've got women who just got beat up by their husbands the week before—they've still got the bruises and the welts—

sitting across the hall from them waiting their turn to go into court.

You inevitably have the occasional file that gets misplaced or lost, or that falls behind a radiator, further delaying things. You've got dockets—the sheets outside the courtroom showing you what cases are going to be dealt with that day—that are page after page after page. You've got hard-working Family Court judges, at the end of the day—recognizing that they have their court staff to consider, who have been working eight, nine, 10 hours, where accuracy is critical—who have to tell the people left on the list whose cases haven't been dealt with that they're afraid they're going to have to adjourn the matter and come back next time. Then the court clerk advises those people when the next available court dates are, and they're weeks and weeks down the road.

The restraining order under section 35 of this government's legislation is fine and good, and we support restraining orders that are enforced by police under the Criminal Code. But to somehow suggest that it's preferable to the restraining orders called intervention orders under old Bill 117, the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000, is absolute nonsense—nonsense, nonsense, nonsense. There are no provisions for 24/7 access to a judge or a justice or a JP with the power to give these orders. You line up along with everybody else.

Bill 117, the Domestic Violence Protection Act, has never been proclaimed. Somehow, advocates Cross and Dale—news to us on the committee, news to Ms. Elliott. She, as you know, was a practising lawyer until she got here, at Queen's Park, and still keeps well tuned to what is going on in the legal community. It sure as heck was news to me. Somehow these presenters, Cross and Dale, from the YWCA, who support the repeal of the Domestic Violence Protection Act—amazing—say this about Jim Flaherty's Bill 117, the Domestic Violence Protection Act. This is what the submitters Cross and Dale told us in committee: "While women's advocates initially supported this legislation, it quickly became apparent to us, as the regulations were being developed, that it was essentially unworkable and not helpful to women." Well, where in Hades did they get that data? I suggest to you that that is an oh-so-recent fabrication that's a far from fair or accurate apology for the government's abandonment of Bill 117, the Domestic Violence Protection Act.

It's apparent that for Bill 117 to become workable, we would need more justices of the peace. It's apparent that those justices of the peace would have to be prepared to work shifts of 24 hours; not a solid 24 hours, but they'd have to be prepared to take night shifts and midnight shifts just like a whole lot of other working people, the ones who are still fortunate enough to be working. And it's apparent that to be a designated justice of the peace, you would require training that enabled you to deal with—we're not talking about parking tickets here; we're talking about decisions made on the balance of probabilities that have a significant impact on the respondent, if that's the proper word, or the person against whom the restraining order is being sought.

Well, heck, we just had legislation in this Parliament not that long ago—New Democrats supported it, not that it didn't have its flaws—that had as its goal the professionalization of the JP bench, what some call the lay bench. It was an effort to depoliticize the appointment of justices of the peace—although we all know, don't we, that it's still very political, because at the end of the day the list is submitted to the Attorney General and it's the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the cabinet, who says yea or nay. Is that not fair, Mr. Martiniuk? Really not that much has changed in that regard.

We were way behind in this province. Most other jurisdictions had a stand-alone domestic violence protection act, a structure whereby women could protect themselves, or at least try to. And instead of working to ensure that the Domestic Violence Protection Act of the year 2000 was workable, with sufficient justices of the peace and places for them to work out of—oh, and we've got all sorts of ways of accommodating folks who don't live in close proximity, because we could use video access to a justice of the peace, couldn't we, understanding that that intervention order, under the Domestic Violence Protection Act, was an intervention order, a restraining order, that was enforceable by the police using the Criminal Code of Canada in breach of a court order.

So the government didn't exactly invent anything new, did they? They repealed, by virtue of section 21 of their bill, the Domestic Violence Protection Act which provided police Criminal Code enforceable restraining orders, both ex parte, temporary, and longer-term ones, with notice to the respondent, and available without initiating any other court process, without waiting for your turn in a crowded, backlogged Family Court house. The government repeals that, is apparently applauded, at least by the YWCA here in Toronto, for doing that, and the YWCA—their presenters, Cross and Dale—tell us that Bill 133 is the way to go.

Now, what was even more interesting is that not long after the YWCA made its presentation, there was another presentation on behalf of Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre for Women and Children, Durham region, by Carol Barkwell. This too was a presentation by a woman who spends her career helping other women, helping them protect themselves from domestic violence. She also, in her submission, says, "We support Bill 133, which offers restraining order amendments that provide significant improvements in enforcement and accountability, as well as expanding access to them by greater categories of people in need." Horse feathers. Horribly misinformed. Improvements in enforceability? No, because the intervention under the restraining order of the Domestic Violence Protection Act was a breach of a court order under the Criminal Code enforceable by the police and utilization of arrest powers and holding people in custody, requiring them to submit to bail hearings.

1710

I don't know where Ms. Barkwell got her information. I have no idea where Ms. Barkwell got here information.

Perhaps from the government website, perhaps from some obscure 1-800 telephone line. The government seems to be big on 1-800 phone lines. But it just wasn't accurate.

But then, interestingly, Ms. Barkwell says, "Additionally, we support the repeal of Ontario's Domestic Violence Protection Act, passed in 2000 and never implemented due in part to the number of concerns raised by many system stakeholders." It would have been helpful if Ms. Barkwell had told us who some of these system stakeholders were. It would have been helpful if she had told us what some of those concerns were. I asked Ms. Barkwell about the interestingly familiar tone of her submission, because it had many of the very same lines and phrases as the submission made by the YWCA. The pages should know if you plagiarize, you get an F, right? Plagiarism isn't countenanced. Somebody seems to have been distributing these lines about the Domestic Violence Protection Act and the concern of stakeholders and its unworkability, because Ms. Barkwell acknowledged that, yes, she works closely with the YWCA, so therefore it should come as no surprise that some of the language would be similar.

That was it in terms of any critical support—and this wasn't very critical—from the broader antiviolence movement, the movement that is committed to protecting women from violence and building a society, a culture where violence not only isn't tolerated but is reduced significantly. Very, very frustrating to have presenters who leave us with the impression of but singing from a page of the government's hymn book.

Now, the parliamentary assistant, for whom I have great regard, was of course the person forced to carry this bill through the committee process. He's forced to, he's required to, he's compelled to; he doesn't have a say in the matter. But not once was there any acknowledgment by the government that the DVPA, the Domestic Violence Protection Act, had restraining orders that were enforceable by utilizing arrest powers under the Criminal Code, in fact breaches of which constituted offences under the Criminal Code, and that they were available 24/7, that they were determined on the balance of probabilities and that the police would assist women in obtaining those orders.

Submitters Cross and Dale acknowledge that it's true—oh, my goodness—that the Domestic Violence Protection Act offers the possibility of 24-hour-a-day access to emergency protection orders. "This is emotionally attractive," they say, "especially if we consider the picture of a terrified woman being threatened by her abuser in the middle of the night. However, the facts just don't support this picture. First, according to the evidence of the domestic violence death review committee, women are not killed because they could not get a restraining order in the middle of the night or on the weekend; they're killed after they get a restraining order, because the police either do not enforce it or are not able to enforce it properly."

What the heck are they talking about? The restraining order under the Domestic Violence Protection Act is

precisely that sort of restraining order that the police can use arrest powers on, because breach of that restraining order is a breach of the Criminal Code. What's going on? Why couldn't these people be straight with the committee?

They go on to say that "if a woman is in such a dangerous situation in the middle of the night, she should be calling the police to have criminal charges laid...." Fair enough. But then they go on to say that "under the DVPA, a woman who wishes to obtain an emergency protection order outside regular court hours must contact the police to do so." That's a problem? That's a concern? That's an issue? That's a hurdle? This makes sure that women literally get a ride in a police cruiser to the justice of the peace.

On the one hand, these advocates are telling us that women should be calling the police, then on the other hand saying that the Domestic Violence Protection Act doesn't work because the police might get involved. While I am very, very cognizant of the debate around zero tolerance in terms of prosecution—as a matter of fact, I just stumbled across an interesting article from the publication *Law and Social Inquiry*, "The Power and Practice of Mandatory Prosecution upon Misdemeanor Domestic Battery Suspects." The author, Guzik, writes about studies that are far from consistent in their outcomes and in their result.

But then we're told by the YWCA Toronto that "many women in Ontario do not want their partners charged criminally. These women would never use the ... provisions of the DVPA because of the requirement that they work through the police...." Well, fine, then don't. That's why New Democrats, just like the Conservatives—just like Ms. Elliott—supported section 35 of this bill. So if a woman who is in danger wants to wait days and weeks to get a restraining order using the civil process, if you will, of the Family Court, God bless.

I, for one, find the issue of mandatory prosecution a very interesting one. We're far different from the United States. Let's understand that. We watch *Law and Order* and those cop shows and so on. The cop is saying, "Would you like to lay charges?" That doesn't happen in Canada. You see, the charge is the state condemning particular behaviour. It's Her Majesty the Queen in whose name the charge is laid. Victims don't have a right to determine whether or not charges are laid. They can make the case, if they wish, for the court to be compassionate with respect to an accused or perpetrator who is found guilty. They can plead with the crown attorney or with the police not to proceed with charges, but victims don't get to decide when and where charges are laid. The police decide when and where charges are laid. You can lay private charges if you wish, but that's really a separate consideration and not relevant to this particular discussion.

I am amazed that there was not outrage from those women who work with women who are victims of violence about the repeal of the Domestic Violence Protection Act. You didn't have to repeal the Domestic

Violence Protection Act to pass section 35 of this bill. The two are totally separate things, independent of each other, and they could have coexisted quite healthily. It's just truly regrettable that the government would repeal Flaherty's Bill 117 with no accurate explanation of why they would it repeal it. Let it sit unproclaimed until the system is in place, until the structures are there, but don't deny us, don't deny women in our province the potential for a stand-alone Domestic Violence Protection Act and the regime that it creates.

1720

You see, one of the real problems around women and violence is that we still don't adequately fund shelters. We still don't adequately fund second-stage housing. Women fleeing domestic violence are often forced back into that same dangerous household—sometimes forced, marched back to their own murders—as victims of welfare rates that won't assist them and allow them to live with their children, as victims of economic leveraging, as victims of the paucity of supports that are available for women.

Here we are in the city of Toronto, where there's a whole lot of good people working hard and a number of agencies working with women who are victims of violence, and even they can't keep up. Go on up to northern Ontario, to remote, rural Ontario. What does the farm wife do who lives in the farmhouse out miles from nowhere? Where does she go when she's been attacked, when her kids have been attacked or when she legitimately suspects she may be attacked? It is a huge vacuum in the vastest parts of Ontario when it comes to support for women and kids who are victims of violence.

Legal aid, access to lawyers, the mere process of filling out the forms—because the court staff will give you the forms but they won't fill them out for you; it's not their job, and I understand that. There are duty counsels in most of these courthouses, but they won't help you fill out the forms either. So a woman who's already at risk, in fear, perhaps physically damaged, struggles to fill these forms out, to have them submitted to the court, only to be told that it's the wrong form or it's filled out improperly. So she goes home and does it again; she's still got no restraining order, you see.

So unless and until we ensure that we have legal clinics providing support for women seeking protection in our family courts, unless and until we provide a legal aid structure that sufficiently compensates competent family law lawyers so they can act for women who could otherwise not afford them—quite frankly, a restraining order like that in section 35 that has to be sought in a court after initiating process. Oh, by the way, initiating process usually, although ex parte orders are available under section 35 of the government's bill, involves notice to the other party.

There's nothing here for the government to be proud of or for government backbenchers to be pleased about.

Katelynn Sampson: a little girl who was handed over by her drug-addled mother to the woman now charged with first-degree murder—a vicious, vicious slaughter of

Katelynn. The experienced and long-time homicide detective at the Toronto Police Services told the press in Toronto that when coming upon the now-dead body of Katelynn Sampson, he witnessed injuries that were unprecedented in his policing career. We're not talking about some social worker here; we're talking about a tough cop who investigates murders, who discovers bodies in all their gruesome, deadly state, people who have been shot, people who have been axed, people who have been baseball-batted. We're talking about a tough cop who has seen a lot of dead bodies, a lot of murder victims, a lot of corpses, but who, upon discovering the cold, cold corpse of Katelynn Sampson, identifies it as perhaps the most vicious in his career. As I said earlier, Katelynn wasn't abducted; she didn't wander away from home and end up in a strange part of town. A provincially appointed judge signed off on Katelynn's custody to the woman now awaiting trial for first-degree murder, along with that same woman's partner, spouse.

Who is taking care of the children? The knee-jerk response by this government is, "Oh well, hell's bells, we'll require criminal record checks," that great panacea; except let's for just a minute understand what the law is now around custody. Let's go to the existing Children's Law Reform Act and the very sections that are being repealed. In effect, when there is a custody application in a provincial courtroom, or in any court, quite frankly, that is dealing with the Children's Law Reform Act, "The merits of an application ... in respect of custody ... shall be determined on the basis of the best interests of the child...." That means there has to be a determination; someone has to address their mind to it. That section doesn't stand without any direction for a judge because it goes on to say the court "shall." That's not "maybe," that's not "might," that's not if it feels like it, that's not if there's enough time, that's not if it is so inclined. The court "shall," "shall," "shall." That means mandatory. It doesn't say "may"; it says "shall consider all the child's needs and circumstances, including ... the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person ... claiming custody ... of the child...."

I read the transcript of the proceedings in that 311 Jarvis Street courthouse of appearances before the judge that would appear to have been mere minutes long, and nobody inquired into or considered the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and the person seeking custody. Nobody even saw the child. The child was never in court. Nobody talked to that child. Nobody knew the physical condition of that child, the emotional condition of that child.

"The court shall consider ... the child's views and preferences...." Nobody asked Katelynn what her views were; nobody asked Katelynn what her druthers were. Nobody. And we're not talking about some backroom baby-selling deal. We're talking about a provincial court with a judge and with court clerks and court reporters and with officials scurrying here and there.

"The court shall consider ... the length of time the child has lived in a stable home environment...." Nobody considered that in the case of Katelynn.

"The court shall consider ... the ability and willingness of each person applying for custody ... to provide the child with guidance and education, the necessities of life and any special needs of the child...." The court never made that inquiry and wasn't able to consider that in the way that it was required to.

"The court shall consider ... any plans proposed for the child's care and upbringing...." No consideration.

"The court shall consider ... the permanence and stability of the family unit with which it is proposed that the child will live...." No consideration.

"The court shall consider"—the court shall consider—"the ability of each person applying for custody of ... the child to act as a parent." Good God. This child, Katelynn Sampson, was brutally murdered within a very short time of that court signing her over by way of a custody order to the woman now charged with first-degree murder of that sweet, sweet, angelic little girl.

The government's response is to have criminal records checks. It's so lame, as they say. It's also so sad. Does the absence of a criminal record indicate that a person is a worthy custodial parent? I don't think so. Most child molesters don't have criminal records, count on it, and when they do acquire one, they've probably been molesting and attacking kids for not just months but literally years. There are a whole lot of entirely unfit people, incapable of being parents, who don't have criminal records. At the same time, so what if there was a marijuana conviction when that custodial parent was 18 years old? Those things happen from time to time when you're 18 or 19.

Then the court says there shall be inquiries made into children's aid societies, family and children's services, to determine whether or not there are any records or files involving that person—again, lame. We have an Office of the Children's Lawyer in the Ministry of the Attorney General here in the province of Ontario that has an obligation, a duty that is mandated, to protect children's interests. Where were they for Katelynn Sampson?

New Democrats made it clear that when you're making somebody the custodial parent of a child, that person should be the subject matter of an assessment. There are any number of people out there who are trained to perform these assessments—people in the social work field, amongst others. That assessment could be a very brief one or it could be a rather lengthy one. In fact, the existing law, the Children's Law Reform Act, section 30, provides for precisely that: "The court before which an application is brought in respect of custody ... may appoint a person who has technical or professional skill to assess and report to the court on the needs of the child and the ability and willingness of the parties ... to satisfy the needs of the child." Well, hallelujah, nobody reached section 30 of the Children's Law Reform Act when Katelynn was sent to her death.

Of course, we have the notorious judges' letter. Mr. Dunlop read it in its entirety; I won't. I'm pleased that it is a part of the record. It is a remarkable, remarkable thing, first of all, that judges, around a dozen of them—

not retired judges, but sitting judges in the family courts, and they've identified the courts that they sit in as some of the busiest family courts in this province, in this country. It is remarkable and, oh, so rare that judges would unilaterally make a submission to a standing committee of this Legislature and, furthermore, make a submission around legislation that's directly impacting on them that they are expected to administer once it becomes law. I have never, ever seen that happen in this Parliament. The judges were scathing in their condemnation of the government's lame proposal to protect children in custody hearings. The judges point out that this legislation would require them to act as investigators. They write to the committee:

"In our system of justice, as appeal courts have told us repeatedly, judges are not charged with the task of being investigators. It is improper for judges to assume this role. If we turn judges into investigators, as this legislation proposes, we risk compromising justice and the appearance of justice in our courts." How can this government be proud of legislation that compels judges to reply in that way?

"Today Family Court judges in Ontario are expected to make crucial legal decisions affecting the well-being of children in an environment which has been degraded by the disappearance of family lawyers." What are judges telling us? They're telling us that the absence of legal counsel, of competent legal counsel, of trained legal counsel, of legal counsel with family law expertise in our family courts, has degraded the system. "This problem is likely most acute in the provincial family courts, where parties of modest means come to seek a resolution of their urgent"—urgent—"family problems. These litigants cannot afford lawyers and cannot qualify for legal aid. They cannot afford child psychologists, custody assessors"—we were just talking about that—"parenting coordinators, and private mediators...."

"Vast numbers of Family Court litigants are unable to retain lawyers to represent them. For the past number of years legal services in our courts have been delivered primarily by per diem duty counsel.... Parties who by any calculation are 'the working poor'"—the working poor, Mr. Zimmer, and that population is growing, isn't it?—"do not qualify for legal aid. They don't even qualify for duty counsel services. They are unrepresented...."

"The family law legal system is complex. Self-represented parties are at a tremendous disadvantage...."

"The test for the court to apply in custody cases is 'What order is in the best interests of the children involved?' In deciding this question, the court will consider all circumstances that are relevant to the child's interests. The task of sifting through the endless facts of a family's history to find those that will assist the court to make a proper determination used to fall on lawyers." But you will remember they just said that there is an absence of lawyers in our family courts and a denial of access to duty counsel and legal aid for those who would constitute the working poor, and even with legal aid, there are precious few skilled family law lawyers who will take on

cases because of the arbitrary and artificially low cap. Lawyers simply can't afford to do that work.

"There is an obvious solution to this problem. There was a time in relatively recent memory in this province when every uncontested divorce case required a report from the official guardian confirming that the proposed custodial arrangements were adequate. This is no longer the case. The Office of the Children's Lawyer now has the discretion to refuse to accept a case." Look, this is a group of judges, a dozen or so, who have a combined total of decades-plus on the bench, who have been dealing with these cases day in and day out—day in, day out, day in, day out. "However, an investigation by the Children's Lawyer is, in our view, the clear solution to the problem of custody cases where parties are unrepresented, or where an application is unopposed, and a judge has reason to be concerned adequate information is not being provided to the court." What a modest proposal.

These judges say hooey on the criminal records searches. These judges say hooey on this complex process of inquiring of any number of children's aid societies about whether or not there's a file and then just dumping this stuff, big piles of this stuff, in front of the judge and saying, "Okay, Judge, go to town. Do your stuff." The judges are saying, "No, we're not investigators. It's not our job. The Court of Appeal has said so. Furthermore, you're giving us stuff that may have no relevance whatsoever and that doesn't assist us whatsoever in determining the propriety of a particular custody order that you're asking us to make."

1740

Just imagine for a minute if the judge down at 311 Jarvis Street had used her existing powers under section 30 to say to the proposed custodial applicant for Katelynn—just imagine if that judge had used her existing power to order an assessment of that proposed custodial parent. Why, that custody assessor would have talked to Katelynn. That custody assessor would have talked to Katelynn's teacher. That custody assessor would have talked to neighbours in the neighbourhood. And we know that Katelynn's natural mother, as I say, was a drug addict, and the best thing that could be said about her is that she understood her inability to care for a baby. We have to give her that much credit.

Just think of what a custody assessor could have told the court about the living arrangements. That court didn't even know whether there was a bed for that little girl, never mind a bedroom. That court had no idea where this little girl was going to live, whether she was going to live in a condominium, whether she was going to live in a high-rise, whether she was going to live in a little bungalow, or whether she was going to live out on the street or in shelters. The court never knew whether the child might be being placed in the custody of people who live from shelter to shelter. Just imagine what that court might have been able to do had it ordered a custody assessment. It might have saved that little girl's life.

Here's this little girl—she's in a courtroom. There are some scary places in the world today. There are some

frightening things that go on not just throughout the world but in our own hometowns. Shouldn't a kid, a little kid, at least be able to feel safe in a courtroom, where you've got the judge up there with the robes and the colourful sash, and you've got the big coat of arms behind that judge on the wall? You've got the authority of the state. If there's any place where a kid should feel safe, shouldn't it be in that courtroom? And experienced judges are saying that they can ensure kids' safety if only this government would have legislation that would require a custody assessment in the sets of circumstances that they've described.

Most of the stuff that's being proposed by this government is going to be forms; it's going to be, "Check the box and sign here." The evidentiary quality of it is zip. It is, as some say, not worth the paper it's written on. It's not going to be particularly useful or helpful to judges, and the judges have said so. Why would this government not take this counsel?

I'm sure the parliamentary assistant, for whom I have great regard, is pained, because I know he's a lawyer, a very good lawyer. He's a very good representative of his community. I'm sure the parliamentary assistant is pained, because he might suspect, as I do, that this legislation that the government is proposing now wouldn't have protected Katelynn Sampson either.

Such a modest and simple proposal: Let's have an assessment of the proposed custodial situation. When's the last time, Speaker—I don't know—you might have gone to the humane society to get a dog or a cat. Humane societies make literally more inquiries of adoptive kitty parents or puppy parents than this government's proposing for kids. They'll not give you a big dog if you live in a small apartment. They'll say, "No, take the little puppy here, or Fluffy the cat." They'll want to know if a particular breed of dog needs a lot of running, how much outdoor space you've got. They'll want to know whether you're financially capable of ensuring the dogs or cat or kitty are properly fed and cared for. They'll want to know how often you're home, because it's no good getting a dog if you're going to be away two or three days at a time; if you're an MPP, for instance, and you're only home on weekends. No, no, no to the dog. Are there going to be other kids there? You don't want a dog in a family where kids—some dogs are more hyper and they're more likely to be less accommodating of children, some breeds, and some dogs.

The Humane Society does a more thorough investigation of people who want to take home a puppy or a cat than this government expects of the courts when it comes to real, live kids. Granted, not all transfers in custody are on the basis of people being unable to care for their kids. There are all sorts of circumstances. There are kids, perhaps from out of country, staying with relatives or family friends here to go to school, when the convenience of having a custody order for giving medical consent and so on is desirable. But let's face it, people don't part with their kids lightly, and when a custodial parent is being sought for a kid—let's cut to the chase here—nine times out of 10 something is going on.

Katelynn's mother was a drug addict. It's a pitiful state to be in. The proposed custodial parent by—the court did determine that it was her long-time friend. I don't know about where you come from, Speaker, but where I come from, hard-core drug addicts don't tend to hang around as friends of people with pristine lives. Hard-core drug addicts tend to hang around with people who are members of, generously, subcultures. It's just the nature of the beast and the nature of that horrid disease.

The government has dug its heels in. It refuses to budge. The government has won the approval of at least some of those who advocate for battered women, for women who are victims of domestic assault. Oh, I can just hear the condemnation of people who would condemn this bill by those same people. Ms. Elliott and I, boy, we got lectured to by those two women from the YWCA: "We urge the committee to set aside partisan point-scoring to hear what we have to say from our considerable experience...." Of course, then they go on to say, "We ... urge you to recommend this bill, as written, for third reading."

Hell's bells. The government introduced a whole whack of amendments. These people walked in and said, "Pass this bill as written, just the way it is."

Ms. Elliott and I pleaded with some of these people, saying that you don't get too many kicks at the can. This legislation doesn't come forward every year. In that cabinet, ministers have to compete with each other. There's kicking and clawing and scratching and biting, minister upon minister, to get their bill at the head of the line. It will probably be a decade and maybe a few more deaths of kids before this legislation comes back before a Parliament.

We voted—the Conservatives and I—against returning this bill to the House. In the committee process, when the clause-by-clause is wrapped up, the question that's put is, "Shall the bill be reported back?" I remember my Conservative colleagues and I saying no, on a recorded vote; we voted against it because it wasn't ready.

Jeez, we're not talking about—I don't know—something that in and of itself is just some bureaucratic process. We're talking about kids, we're talking about women. We're talking about people who are victims. We're talking about people who are dying.

1750

And this bill could have been so much better. This bill could have been truly effective. We voted against reporting the bill back. It wasn't ready. The discussion had not yet been exhausted, and the absence of candour was alarming.

The government has the powerful tool of its majority. The government will paint people who oppose this bill as being disinterested in the welfare of children. The government will paint people who oppose this bill as being disinterested in the welfare of women who are victims. It will. This government will use its propagandists and its propaganda machine to condemn those who would dare speak out at the ineffectiveness and the inappropriateness of this legislation and charge them with being Neanderthals and being anti-kid and anti-woman.

There's somehow this—I said it before—almost snotty attitude that opposition members of course should be supporting government legislation. No, our job is to hold the government to account, our job is to expose the government when it fails, our job is to take bad legislation and try to make it better, and I say the opposition has done precisely that on all three points when it comes to Bill 133.

I don't accuse anybody on the government benches of any malice or ill will. Once again, the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer, did stellar service in stewarding this bill through committee. That's his job. The minister, who didn't write the legislation but was under pressure to get something on the table quickly because the government was taking some significant heat over the Katelynn Sampson murder—the Attorney General rushed this bill out of the word processor and again hung his hat in a knee-jerk way on the panacea of a criminal record check and a children's aid society file check. The government didn't know what the advice of judges was going to be. That's fair enough, but when they discovered what judges were saying to them, surely that should have caused the government to pause, to slow down and to start reflecting on what exactly those judges—highly trained, highly experienced women and men who deal with these scenarios day after day, week after week.

I would have been pleased to see this bill called the Katelynn Sampson bill, but I'm equally delighted that it's not, because this bill wouldn't have protected Katelynn Sampson and isn't going to protect little girls and little boys a year, five years, 10 years from now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):
Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to address one point that the member for Welland raised: his concern about this business of the authority to go in and check, if you will, the criminal records of non-parent applicants in custody cases. So just to be clear, this is what the act would provide:

Non-parents who apply for custody would also be required to submit to a police records check as part of the process. What's wrong with that? That's similar to requirements that are already in place for lots of people who apply for various jobs or volunteer activities that involve direct contact with children.

Second, the act says non-parents who apply for custody would also have to provide information about the existence of any previous children's aid society records and the time frames for those. What's wrong with that? Why wouldn't a judge want to know if a non-parent has been involved with the CAS in various matters?

Third, judges would also have access to information about any other child protection or any other family law cases involving a non-parent. When you think of that, what is wrong? Why wouldn't you want the judge who's going to decide where the child is going to go to know everything you could possibly know about a non-parent applicant? Particularly, is there a criminal record? Is there a previous involvement with the children's aid

society involving children? Are there any other previous family law matters, particularly involving children?

It seems to me it's entirely reasonable for a judge to want to know that, and what this act does is give the specific authority for the judge to get that information.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Welland, I think, spent considerable time making sure the government side understood that we support the intent of the legislation, but find parts of the legislation missing and failing.

As the parliamentary assistant has just stated, there are three new provisions that are added to create new requirements in cases where a person who is not the parent of a child applies for custody through the courts. We don't have a problem with that. There are other sections and provisions that are problematic, and those amendments were moved by Mr. Kormos and Ms. Elliott during the hearings, all of which were defeated.

That's where the consultation to get this thing right was missing. It was deficient to the extent of trying to find that consensus of, first, putting not just Katelynn Sampson, the family, at ease, but other potential victims. The law is supposed to address the deficiencies that exist today, and I think it fails in that measure.

I would say if you look at Ontario, there have been 25 female victims of spousal homicide each year in Ontario from 1975 through 2004. This bill does not provide adequate access to justice in the real sense and to children in the other sense. So in any test of this legislation, however well-intended, we can't support it as it's currently structured. That's the point the government doesn't seem to be prepared to listen to.

When it comes to a vote, I can only say this: You have moved in the right direction. You have not moved completely in the right direction, and you haven't got it right. Why haven't you listened to the comments by the member from Welland and the member from Whitby-Oshawa during the hearings? Why have you not listened and acted, as has been requested not only by myself but by other members on all sides of this debate? We would like to support it, but it just isn't getting the job done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to thank the member from Welland for his extensive, thoughtful and moving analysis of what's before us.

Legislation can be useful. I know that's an odd thing to say in a Legislature, but from time to time legislation can be useful and actually address a problem.

One of the things the member from Welland didn't go through thoroughly were the comments of the judges who talked about setting aside the legislation itself. If you don't have in place a system of legal aid so that people are properly represented in court, then their issues are not brought before the judges in a way that's coherent, that actually defends their interests and defends the interests of the children whose lives are being dealt with at that moment.

The judges talk about the lack of support for those who don't speak English or who don't speak it as their native tongue. The judges talk about the extent to which the whole system is stretched to the point that people fall through the gaps in that system. So whether the act itself, as written, is useful or not useful, in the end it functions essentially as wallpaper overtop of a crumbling wall, and that wallpaper can hold the pieces as they come forward, but in the end cannot deal with the fundamental structural problem.

If you don't deal with poverty, if you don't deal with the full range of elements that pull people's lives apart in society, and if, having neglected those elements, you don't deal with people being properly represented when they come before a judge and you don't have proper staffing in those courtrooms, all is chaos. This act, whether it's useful or not, in light of those larger structural problems is not going to do what has to be done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I feel compelled to rise in response to some of the comments that the member for Welland made today.

I want to echo the comments about the member for Willowdale, who has done such a great job on this legislation and worked so hard, and to just emphasize that the family law reform that we're looking at today will enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of our family justice system here in the province. It'll better protect women and children from domestic violence, it will help to ensure the best interests of children in custody decisions, and it will support fairness for families when marriages break down.

The member for Welland made some comments about some of the people who work in the violence-against-women area, and I wanted to note that the violence-against-women stakeholders are supportive of this legislation. We heard from a variety of folks who work in the field, who work directly with victims and have on-the-ground experience, and they are supportive of this legislation. I was disturbed to hear the comments of the member from Welland, who made some disparaging comments about those people who are working in the field with these victims of violence. He questioned their knowledge and their experience, and I think that was inappropriate in this forum, as we've heard from many of these people who are doing a great job on the front lines, working with victims of violence.

I also wanted to just take this opportunity to acknowledge that I meet regularly with folks in my community from VCARS, Amelia Rising, the community counseling centre, which is here today, the transition house—people who are devoting themselves to assisting those who have found themselves in situations of violence in getting out of those situations and helping to protect them from being further victimized.

I also wanted to note for the record that Bill 133 does criminalize breaches of restraining orders. I think there were comments made by the member from Welland that

may have left that in some doubt, and I just wanted to clarify that.

I thank you for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Welland, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I wish people would pay closer attention. But those who didn't pay close attention can always read the Hansard, can't they?

The member for Willowdale speaks of the amendments and asks, "Why wouldn't judges want this information?" I don't know, member for Willowdale. You've got 12 senior Family Court judges who, in a lengthy letter to the committee, have said, "Thanks but no thanks," to your amendments. They say that they don't work; they're unworkable; they don't address the issue; they don't solve the problem. So I'd say to you that you might want to ask those judges, because you certainly didn't have any judges praising the legislation. You have some of the most senior and experienced Family Court judges saying this is not the solution, and saying quite clearly that the need for custody assessments, professional assessments, is what's going to address the issue.

In your heart, you know that. I know you know that because I've known you long enough, and I know you well enough, and I know you to be a good person and a caring person and someone who's as committed a member of this assembly as one could ever find. So I know that in your heart, you know that that's the case. I understand that you have to run with this bill because, as PA, you've got to do the heavy lifting and sometimes the nasty work, the stuff the minister himself won't touch. But I don't want your constituents to think that you think this legislation is the be-all and end-all, because that's a disservice to you, Mr. Zimmer.

I say to my dear friend the government House leader that I wish she'd read my comments carefully. Do I have concerns when people come before the committee with inaccurate information? You bet your boots I do, and I'll continue to have those concerns.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being slightly past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, May 7.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldeep Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craiton
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 152, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2009 sur la réduction de la pauvreté, projet de loi 152, Mme Matthews	
Third reading agreed to	6601

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6601
--------------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Catholic Family Counselling Centre	
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6602
Family Counselling Centre of Brant	
Mr. Dave Levac.....	6602
Maggie McCreath	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6602
Community Access to Child Health	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6602
Amateur Singing Contest	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	6603
Smoking ban	
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6603
Lisgar GO station	
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	6603
Public transit	
Mr. Bill Mauro	6603
Certified General Accountants of Ontario	
Mr. Bruce Crozier	6604
Royal Assent / Sanction royale	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6604
Private members' public business	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6604
Consideration of Bill 171	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	6604

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
Mrs. Julia Munro	6604
Debate adjourned	6605

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6605
Motion agreed to	6605

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Taxation

Mrs. Joyce Savoline	6605
---------------------------	------

Professional hockey franchise

Mr. Dave Levac.....	6605
---------------------	------

Professional hockey franchise

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6605
---------------------	------

Pension plans

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6606
-----------------------	------

Professional hockey franchise

Mr. Jeff Leal.....	6606
--------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6606
-----------------------	------

Ontario budget

Mr. Bob Delaney.....	6607
----------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	6607
--------------------------	------

Professional hockey franchise

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6607
------------------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. John O'Toole.....	6608
-----------------------	------

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell	6608
------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Family Statute Law Amendment Act, 2009, Bill 133, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2009 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le droit de la famille, projet de loi 133, M. Bentley

Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	6608
Mr. David Zimmer	6609
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6610
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6610
M. Shafiq Qadri.....	6611
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6611
Mr. David Zimmer	6611
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6611
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6618
Mr. Khalil Ramal	6618
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6619
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	6619
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6619
Mr. David Zimmer	6626
Mr. John O'Toole.....	6627
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6627
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6627
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	6628
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	6628

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 6 May 2009 / Mercredi 6 mai 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, Bill 152, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2009 sur la réduction de la pauvreté, projet de loi 152, Mme Matthews

Mr. Michael Prue	6585
Mrs. Julia Munro	6586
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6589
Mr. Paul Miller	6590
Mr. Jeff Leal	6590
Mr. Michael Prue	6590
Mrs. Julia Munro	6590
Third reading vote deferred	6591

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	6591
Mr. Bill Mauro	6591
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette	6591
Ms. Andrea Horwath	6591
Mr. Bob Delaney	6591
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6591
Mr. Jeff Leal	6591
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6591
Mr. David Zimmer	6591
Mr. Robert Bailey	6591
Mr. Howard Hampton	6591
Mr. Dave Levac	6591
Mme France Gélinas	6591
Hon. Monique M. Smith	6591
Hon. John Gerretsen	6591
Hon. Michael Chan	6591
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	6591
Hon. John Wilkinson	6591
Hon. John Milloy	6591
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	6592
Hon. M. Aileen Carroll	6592
Ms. Andrea Horwath	6592
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	6592

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Employment standards

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6592
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6592

Ontario economy

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	6593
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6593

Ontario economy

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6594
Hon. George Smitherman	6594
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6594

Employment standards

Ms. Andrea Horwath	6594
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6595

Ontario economy

Mr. Ted Chudleigh	6595
Hon. Dwight Duncan	6596

Employment standards

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6596
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6596

Teachers

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde	6597
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6597

Employment standards

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6597
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6597

Mental health services

Ms. Laurel C. Broten	6598
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	6598

Employment standards

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	6598
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6598

Employment standards

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6599
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6599

Poverty

Ms. Helena Jaczek	6599
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6599

Employment standards

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6600
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6600

Employment standards

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6601
Hon. Peter Fonseca	6601

Continued on inside back cover

